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The Ephemera of Remembrance in the
Wake of War and Disaster, c.1899–1939

A. Foster

PhD

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The Ephemerality of Remembrance in the
Wake of War and Disaster, c.1899–1939

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the requirements of the University of
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Abstract

In the wake of war and disaster families wanted to mourn their dead. Public memorials to those who died in the First World War were influenced by governmental, local, and elite agents. The families of the dead participated in wider Remembrance Day initiatives, but they found memorial agency in the construction of grief on a private, familial, level. While historians of the First World War have acknowledged the importance of family memorial practices, none have yet tackled the subject in a sustained study. This split between public and private, between individuals and the nation state, is where this doctoral study of family memorialisation lies. After the First World War, families did not have access to a body, had little authority over how their loved one's grave looked, and were not allowed to shape memorial services on Remembrance Sunday. So too, the families of those who lost a loved one in a mining disaster were given limited autonomy over burial practices. Therefore, the experiences of those who lost a loved one in the war are compared to those who had been bereaved through a mining disaster in order to contextualise wartime loss. Behind closed doors and in liminal spaces, families enacted memorial agency over the dead and attempted to provide points of memory to remember them by. This thesis focuses on the small, the ephemeral, and the physical to access this hidden world of family mourning in the first four decades of the twentieth century.

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 - Mining Family Memories	12
Chapter 2 - Mining Disasters and the First World War: a case for comparison	28
Chapter 3 - Intimate Grief	53
Chapter 4 - Posting Grief	86
Chapter 5 - Grief in the Press	106
Chapter 6 - Empathetic Ephemera	125
Chapter 7 - Mass Ephemera and the Construction of Remembrance	143
Conclusion	179
Bibliography	185

Abbreviations

BL: British Library

BM: Beamish Museum

BPC: Beamish People's Collection

Bod: Bodleian Library

CWGC: Commonwealth War Graves

DCRO: Durham County Record Office

DGA: Dumfries and Galloway Archives

DLIC: Durham Light Infantry Collection

DPM: Devil's Porridge Museum

GA: Glamorgan Archives

GwA: Gwent Archives

IWGC: Imperial War Graves Commission

IWM: Imperial War Museum

JJCol: John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera

MO: Mass Observation Archive

NA: Northumberland Archives

NeA: Newham Archives

NCMM: National Coal Mining Museum

NMM: National Mining Museum

NRM: National Railway Museum

PCW: People's Collection Wales

RBA: Richard Burton Archives

StF: St Fagans National Museum of History

SWCC: South Wales Coalfield Collection

WA: Whitehaven Archive

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the University Ethics Committee on 25.08.2016.

I declare that the word count of this thesis is 73,181 words.

Name: Ann-Marie Foster

Introduction

The centenary of the First World War in Britain highlighted, in a rather stark way, the split between public and private memorial practices relating to the conflict which have been present over the last one hundred years. There was an extreme interest in family histories of the war throughout the centenary, and at the start of the four year period historians of the First World War predicated that family memories of the conflict would fuel British national engagement with wider public centenary initiatives.¹ The importance of family narratives of war was recognised by national and international institutions through the creation of initiatives such as the Imperial War Museum's 'Lives of the First World War' and Europeana 1914–1918.² These online platforms of remembrance have revealed a plethora of objects and ephemera which still remain in family archives and form the spine of many people's First World War memorial practices. These family objects have the potential to contain a deep emotional resonance for their custodians.³ This was reflected in public broadcasts, and in the lead up to the 2018 Armistice Day celebrations, BBC radio programmes such as the Today Show featured family objects which individual members of the public used to remember their dead.⁴ Yet, nationally, the 2018 Remembrance Sunday was characterised by a mass memorial service at the Cenotaph, a service in Westminster Abbey, and memorialisation initiatives such as Pages of the Sea. While the centenary period has heavily focused on collecting family memorial objects, on Armistice Day itself, they were largely absent from national commemorations.

This split between public and private began in the interwar period, and during the 1920s and 1930s public memorialisation on a set day was similarly characteristic of national remembrance initiatives. Yet there was also an ongoing undercurrent of family memorialisation practices, separate to these set days of national remembrance, which utilised objects and ephemera to mediate the grief felt by the bereaved. Behind closed doors and in liminal spaces, families enacted memorial agency over the dead and attempted to provide

¹ As Keith Jeffery suggested in 2015, it was to be 'the compelling fascination of the micro-stories of the conflict, the communal memories and family narratives, [which will] continue to sustain the extraordinary public interest in the war [and the latter] will see the country through to 2018 without being crippled by commemoration fatigue.' See Keith Jeffery, 'Commemoration in the United Kingdom: A multitude of memories', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 50:3 (2015), p. 566.

² Bart Ziino, 'Introduction: Remembering the First World War Today', in Bart Ziino (ed.), *Remembering the First World War* (London, 2015), p. 9; also see James Wallis, "'Great-grandfather, what did you do in the Great War?'" The phenomenon of conducting First World War family history research', in Bart Ziino (ed.), *Remembering the First World War* (London, 2015), pp. 31–34.

³ For example, the archaeologist John Schofield considers that retaining this kind of physical object is a type of 'social commemoration' as 'the object stands for a family member I never met'. See, John Schofield, 'Message and Materiality in Mesopotamia, 1916–1917: My grandfather's diary, social commemoration and the experience of the war', in Nicholas Saunders & Paul Cornish (eds.), *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* (London, 2009), p. 203.

⁴ See, for example, the Today Show, Radio 4, 10 November 2018.

points of memory to remember them by. This split between public and private, between individuals and the nation state, in the interwar period, is where this doctoral study of family memorialisation lies.

The current understanding of wartime memorialisation has largely been through an examination of set days, local war memorials, and public acts of remembrance.⁵ These days were shaped, not by the bereaved families, but by politicians, civil servants, and local elites.⁶ Jay Winter has used this construction of days of remembrance by those who were in positions of power to suggest that official commemoration after the First World War was not wholly sufficient for the families to grieve: monuments were not erected in a particularly timely fashion and families were rarely consulted about the design.⁷ The families of those who died did not, as a general rule, have any ownership over the ways in which their loved ones were publicly remembered in these national ceremonies. Yet, for those who had lost a family member in the war, these public days of remembrance did not constitute the whole of their experiences, or necessarily the preferred method, of memorialising the dead. One woman who lost a brother in the First World War, and kept his Next of Kin Memorial Plaque above her

⁵ See Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain* (London, 1998); Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory* (London, 1994); Mark Connelly, *The Great War Memory and Ritual: commemoration in the city and east London 1916–1939* (London, 2002); Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany 1914–1940* (Cambridge, 2007); George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990); Jenny Macleod, “‘By Scottish hands, with Scottish money, on Scottish soil’: The Scottish National War Memorial and National Identity”, *Journal of British Studies* 49 (January 2010), pp. 73–96. Catherine Moriarty was the founding research coordinator of the National Inventory of War Memorials at the IWM, 1985–1996; her doctoral thesis reflects some of the imagery present in First World War memorials, see Catherine Moriarty, ‘Narrative and the absent body: mechanisms of meaning in First World War memorials’, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1995, also Catherine Moriarty, ‘The Absent Dead and Figurative First World War Memorials’, *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society* 39 (1995), pp. 7–40. For PhD theses about local war memorials see, Denise Coss, ‘First World War Memorials, Commemoration and Community in North East England, 1918–1939’, Unpublished PhD thesis, Durham University, 2012; Anne Brook, ‘God, grief and community: commemoration of the Great War in Huddersfield, c. 1914–1929’, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2009. Local war memorials have also been the focus of some recent doctoral theses about their changing meaning over time, see John Poulter, ‘The role of Remembrance of the First World War in the construction of identity in Northern Ireland’, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2017; Martin Purdy, ‘Westfield War Memorial Village: disability, paternalism and philanthropy’, Unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University, 2017. This is also true for work on memorials to the Second Anglo-Boer War, see Peter Donaldson, *Remembering the South African War* (Liverpool, 2013); Meurig Jones, ‘A Survey of Memorials to the Second Anglo-Boer War in the United Kingdom and Eire’, *Journal of Africana Society* 15 (1999), pp. 98–113.

⁶ See Nick Mansfield, ‘Class Conflict and Village War Memorials, 1914–24’, *Rural History* 6:1 (1995), pp. 67–87; Ken Inglis, ‘The Homecoming: The War Memorial Movement in Cambridge, England’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 27:4 (1992), pp. 589–592; J Bartlett & K M Ellis, ‘Remembering the Dead in Northop: First World War Memorials in a Welsh Parish’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 34:2 (1999), pp. 233–234.

⁷ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, pp. 29–53; Also see Jay Winter, ‘Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War’, in Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1999), especially pp. 54–60; also see Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 255.

bureau, laid flowers on the local war memorial during public ceremonies every November. Yet, she never visited the memorial on other days and she continued to memorialise him privately within the home they had shared as children.⁸ These family memorial practices, which took place within the home, were not limited to set days of national remembrance. While they may have, at times, interacted with public memorials, there was a rich undercurrent of family memorial practices which ran separate to state commemoration.

While historians of the First World War have acknowledged the importance of family memorial practices, none have yet tackled the subject in a sustained study. For example, Winter states that ‘to be sure, families commemorated their own within a wider social and political framework. But the richest texture of remembrance was always within family life.’⁹ If this is the case, it begs the question; why historians have not researched this subject of study. There are two likely reasons: one is historiographical and the other methodological. The first concerns historiographical developments from the 1980s onwards. With the historical ‘memory boom’, of the 1980s and 1990s, the study of collective remembering and collective memorialisation came to the fore. Historians such as Winter pioneered the study of First World War memory during this time, when wider debates about mass memorialisation meant that collective remembrance, not private grief, which reverberated from contemporary issues of memory, such as the *Historikerstreit* and the collapse of Communist regimes, brought issues of public remembrance to the fore.¹⁰ Since then attempts have been made to supplement these important understandings of how memory works, and marry it up with more intimate narratives in First World War studies. Joy Damousi and Carol Acton, in particular, have developed work about private grief in wartime. Both focus on different aspects of post-war grief: Damousi on the Australian experience of existing in the public financial and moral role that the widow was cast and Acton on literary cultures and private writing providing a space to mourn.¹¹ These studies have deepened understandings of wartime grief through the examination of letters and documents. These sources, although excellent for attempting to understand the inner voice of the bereaved, have meant that the mourners have been in some ways artificially dislocated from their immediate physical surroundings. In this doctoral thesis

⁸ Interview with Beverly Towers, 7 March 2016.

⁹ Jay Winter, ‘Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War’, in Astrid Erll & Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *A Companion to Cultural Memory Studies* (Berlin, 2010), pp. 64–65.

¹⁰ Aleida Assmann, ‘Memory, Individual and Collective’, in Robert E. Goodin & Charles Tilly (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 210–211; Jay Winter & Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: debates and controversies, 1914 to the present* (Cambridge, 2005), especially Chapter 8. Also see T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, & Michael Roper (eds.), *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London, 2000), especially their Introduction ‘The politics of war memory and commemoration: contexts, structures and dynamics’.

¹¹ Joy Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia* (Cambridge, 1999); Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime* (Basingstoke, 2007).

it is suggested that, in addition to the types of written experience described by Acton, which are further discussed in Chapter 4, that as physical beings, the bereaved also operated within a world where they could express their grief through the creation and display of objects. In a recent essay, the anthropologist Ruth Toulson and the classicist Zahra Newby drew attention to the physicality of mourning, arguing that ‘grief and ritual are entangled together, often through material culture’.¹² Personalised memorials, codified within a social framework and expressed through a physical object, were created in the physical space of the homes of individual families but also within the homes of extended family and friends.

Physical items were created, displayed, sent to others and many of these objects formed the backbone of family memorial practices during the interwar period. A recognition that the dead are primarily remembered within the home, influenced by the development of material culture studies and the public interest in family history since the early 2000s, has been recognised by a number of academics who are forming new literatures about how families remember the First World War in the present day, and the beginnings of a body of work on family memory of the conflict is emerging.¹³ The work highlights some of the challenges present for scholars working with family memory. In a recent study about the legacy of the First World War in German and British families, Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett found that while descendants of the war generation projected current understandings of the conflict onto the past, they were also receptive to narratives of war which had been passed on from their ancestors.¹⁴ This type of family feedback loop highlights the varied influences on the family, both in the present and emerging from the past. These memories are additionally subject to filtration through individual memory within each family member. Working with family memory, as is discussed in Chapter 1, means balancing a cultural understanding of external influences while also being sensitive to the family narrative being presented, which

¹² Ruth E Toulson & Zahra Newby, ‘Introduction: Emotions and materiality in theory and method’, in Ruth E Toulson & Zahra Newby (eds.), *The Materiality of Mourning: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives* (Routledge, Milton, 2018), p. 4.

¹³ See Bart Ziino, “‘A lasting gift to his descendants’: family memory and the great war in Australia”, *History & Memory* 22:2 (2010), pp. 125–146; Bart Ziino and Carolyn Holbrook, ‘Family History and the great war in Australia’, in Bart Ziino (ed.), *Remembering the First World War* (London, 2015), pp. 39–55. For the work of Roper and Duffett see the project ‘The Generation Between: growing up in the aftermath of war, Britain 1918–1939’. Also see Lucy Noakes, “‘My Husband is Interested in War Generally’: gender, family history and the emotional legacies of total war”, *Women’s History Review* 27:4 (2018), pp. 610–626; James Wallis “‘Great-grandfather, what did *you* do in the Great War?’ The phenomenon of conducting First World War family history research”, in Bart Ziino (ed.), *Remembering the First World War* (London, 2015), pp. 21–38; Michèle Barrett & Peter Stallybrass, ‘Printing, Writing and a Family Archive: Recording the First World War’, *History Workshop Journal* 75 (2013), pp. 1–32.

¹⁴ Michael Roper and Rachel Duffett, ‘Family Legacies in the Centenary: Motives for First World War Commemoration among British and German Descendants’, *History & Memory* 30:1 (2018), p. 78. See Robyn Fivush, ‘Remembering and Reminiscing: How individual lives are constructed in family narratives’, *Memory Studies* 1:1 (2008), pp. 49–58 for an overview of how Western families build memory transmission about family history into social interactions from a young age.

itself has been subject to change and alteration through past narration of the family tale. Despite these methodological challenges, these approaches to understanding the family, and family memory, offer new insight into hitherto obscured dynamic social processes which are crucial to understanding the historical family and their place within wider society.

The understanding of the centrality of the home to family mourning practices, which have emerged as part of this wider literature about family memory, have not been historicised, in part, because the subject is so difficult to reconstruct, and constitutes the second reason for the lack of a concrete study about family memory after the war. The material culture of mourning and how objects of the dead have been interpreted in the past by their owners more broadly, is a topic which has recently become popular among a range of disciplines.¹⁵ The meaning attached to objects can be difficult to find, and without contextualisation, these objects are simply items from the past, void of personal meaning.¹⁶ As we have passed out of living memory of the First World War and its aftermath, those who could have aided this research are no longer available to consult, or to shape the memory of the conflict, and so their families, and traces of information left in various archival deposits, have to be turned to. The multivocal nature of objects can also be difficult to categorise, further adding to the challenge of researching family memorialisation practices. Catherine Moriarty is the only academic to have offered an example of the role of these smaller and more personalised memorial forms in First World War memorial practices, which can occupy several different memorial spaces such as the inclusion of family photographs in street shrines or in the home as a more intimate family memorialisation practice.¹⁷ This is also, in part, why historians have shied away: these memorial objects do not necessarily have a clear meaning. As Moriarty has highlighted, items could be used in several spaces at once, and this is true for nearly all of the memorial objects featured in this thesis. Reading how they were used in the different spaces they occupied is one of the hardest challenges to the historian of material culture, and a mixed methodology, discussed in Chapter 1, of supporting documents, oral histories, and various archival holdings was developed in order to situate these objects within their historical contexts.

While the contextualising information which located family memorialisation as part of a wider social history may be difficult to uncover, it was nonetheless common practice for

¹⁵ Toulson & Newby, 'Introduction', p. 2.

¹⁶ See, for example, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Meaning of Things* (Cambridge, 1981); Margaret Gibson, 'Melancholy Objects', *Mortality* 9:4 (2004), pp. 285–299; Liz Gloyn, Vicky Crewe, Laura King, & Anna Woodham, 'The Ties That Bind: Materiality, Identity, and the Life Course in the "Things" Families Keep', *Journal of Family History* 42:2 (2018), pp. 157–176; the work of Nicholas Saunders and Paul Cornish also strongly links memories and documents with the understanding of objects, see *Contested Objects* (Abingdon, 2009) and *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, memory and the First World War* (Abingdon, 2004).

¹⁷ Catherine Moriarty, '“Though in a Picture Only”: Photographs and Commemoration', in Gail Braybon (ed.) *Evidence, History and the Great War* (New York, 2008), pp. 34–38.

families to commemorate the dead by imbuing objects and ephemera with a memorial status. These objects included framed household items, Next of Kin Memorial Plaques, postcards, printed napkins, and family rolls of honour. Traditional ways of mourning, such as memorial cards, photographic displays, and newspaper notices, were also incorporated into family mourning practices, driven by the forms of ephemera and new technologies, such as photography and photographic reproductions, which reached mass popularity in fin de siècle Europe. Due to this early popularity of memorial ephemera, the technology, printing presses, and techniques to quickly develop personalised mourning material were all in place when the First World War began and were increasingly turned to in the face of mass death. With the advent of cheap photography in the late nineteenth century and the import of cheap materials, such as Japanese paper for printing memorial napkins or German postcards, these forms of memorial material became increasingly popular. These items continued to be produced throughout the interwar period, but became increasingly unpopular in the late 1930s, and were not produced in any great numbers in or after the Second World War. Some forms of memorialisation continued well into the twentieth century, such as the posting of 'In Memoriam' notices in newspapers or the importance of photographs as *milieux de mémoires*, whereas memorial napkins and mass memorial cards were highly specific to the period. The mass circulation of the printed ephemeral memorial items commonly used were, for the most part, only popular for a forty-year period at the beginning of the twentieth century. Families contributed to, bought, or were the subject of these memorial forms and through them developed memory practices pertinent to their particular family and the way they individually chose to memorialise the dead.

The use of these memorial objects and ephemera in the home are key to understanding the agency of the families involved in memorial practices. After the First World War families did not have access to a body, had no real say in how their loved one's grave looked, and very few were allowed to shape memorial services on Remembrance Sunday. However, families exercised autonomy within their homes and decided which memorial objects would be presented and how. They claimed public ownership over the memory of their loved one through the dissemination of 'In Memoriam' notices in local newspapers, images of the dead which were published, and through the production of memorial cards. These actions recast mourners as agents of their own mourning. These dynamic memorial practices, distant from national memorial ones, allowed families to decide on their actions as the bereaved and choose how to mourn their dead in a way that was barred to them elsewhere. Far from being passive mourners who allowed national days of the dead to speak for them, people used objects and ephemera to memorialise the dead in the everyday, away from public remembrance practices, revealing the agency of the bereaved in the early twentieth century.

A similar group which experienced a lack of public agency over the memory of their loved ones were those who had been bereaved because of a mining disaster. In order to contextualise the memorial practices which emerged from wartime deaths, and explore points where the conflict produced certain types of memorial, First World War deaths are compared to deaths in disaster, in particular mining disasters, between the years 1899 and 1939. The two phenomena, explored in Chapter 2, are natural comparators: both involved a heavy loss of life which targeted younger men, had the potential to heavily and disproportionately affect a local area, and the families of the deceased were often denied full access to the body and given little say over burial practices. The small amount of existing historiography has, much like studies of First World War mourning practices focused not on the family role, but instead on the collective memory of coalfield disasters. David Selway, Roger Laidlaw, and John Woodhead are the only three academic historians, of whom Selway is the only contemporary historian, to have worked on mining disasters and their public memory.¹⁸ Yet, within mining communities, as well as among the families who had lost someone in the First World War, new ways of memorialising the dead within the home were enacted as these personal memorialisations offered the bereaved agency over how they commemorated the dead. As with the case of the First World War, in their writings about the South Wales Coalfield, both Selway and Laidlaw stress the importance of both family and localised memory of the disasters, but this has not been studied in any detail.¹⁹ Key disasters, which have lent themselves to this study by the amount of ephemera they left in archives, have been focused on as representative of a period which saw many major disasters. Geographically, Durham County and South Wales are the most heavily featured areas, with Cumbria following closely behind. Through this comparative approach between the two groups of the bereaved, continuities and discontinuities in memorial practices after the First World War become apparent and the impact of the war on memorial forms can be assessed.

The approach taken, which highlights the different practices within families, allows an insight into class differences, and indeed similarities, which existed in the early twentieth century. Traditionally, upper and middle class understandings of mourning have been examined, often because those involved in grieving the dead left ample archival evidence through diaries and letters in a way that their working class counterparts did not.²⁰ This thesis

¹⁸ David Selway, 'Death Underground: Mining Accidents and Memory in South Wales, 1913–74', *Labour History Review* 81:3 (2016), pp. 187–209; Roger Laidlaw, 'The Gresford Disaster in Popular Memory', *Llafur* 6 (1995), pp. 123–146; John Woodhead, 'Essay in Oral History: The Bentley Colliery Disaster', *Labour History Review* (1975), pp. 66–92.

¹⁹ Selway, 'Death Underground', p. 194; Laidlaw, 'The Gresford Disaster', pp. 134–136.

²⁰ This is expressly noted by David Cannadine, 'Death and Grief in Modern Britain', in Jochaim Whaley (ed.), *Mirrors of Mortality* (London, 1982), p. 241; also see Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford, 1996), p. 9. A notable exception is Julie Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870 – 1914* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 10.

begins to break down some of the class barriers commonly associated with the study of death and mourning. Through focusing on objects, understandings of working class responses to death sit alongside middle class ones. This is not always equal, and at times the writings of the upper middle class have been turned to in order to illustrate a salient point. However, working class responses to sudden death in the early twentieth century have begun to emerge in response to the material lens used in this thesis. Yet, in considering this, it must be noted that the mourning practices of those who lost a loved one in the First World War and those who lost someone in a mining disaster is unequal: all miners who died, although by no means the poorest in society, were located within a working class socioeconomic milieu. In general, middle class responses to the First World War are more abundant, and so feature alongside working class ones. In some ways, these comparisons make similarities within mourning practices even more striking: some, such as posting 'Death' notices in newspapers, were so common in the first four decades of the twentieth century they appear to almost be a universal practice for all but the poorest.

With its focus on the family, and the physical items used to access the hidden world of everyday grief which formed the basis of an active memorial culture, this doctoral thesis forms a significant contribution to the study of grief and mourning in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Through detailed examination of objects and ephemera, through their place within family mourning practices, this doctoral research has opened up a new aspect of the field of the study of memorialisation after the First World War. People were not limited to national days of remembrance to express their grief: they had control over the memorial items in their home and the memorial items they chose, designed, and sent to friends and family. They showed that they were active agents in the construction of memorial practices for their family members. This exploration of the agency of families and individuals through these memorial items constitutes a new development in the conceptualisation of interwar grief. This understanding of agency is important if mourning as a wider phenomenon, removed from national days of remembrance, and removed from the prism of only viewing mourning practices through networks of writing and epistolary kin networks is to be understood. Mourning did not stop in the days between memorial events, nor is it hidden to the historian. Although challenging to reconstruct, this doctoral research suggests that viewing mourning through the lens of objects and ephemera is crucial for understanding the rich tapestry of memorial practices which existed separate to larger local and national remembrance initiatives.

These family memorial practices were subject to the same fluctuations as wider war memorialisation practices. In a similar way to the nuanced work about broader First World War memorialisation, which nods towards continuity and change, so too does this exploration

of family memorial practices reveal elements which are unique to war and others which are drawn from longer mourning traditions. There are two oppositional positions which have been taken in regards to the continuities and discontinuities of mourning practices during the First World War. While scholars of the First World War point to continuity in memorial forms the history of death and grief in modern Britain by scholars of death is traditionally seen as one of change: Victorian funeral pageantry gave way to muted mourning and, by the interwar period, elaborate funerals and the memorial paraphernalia which accompanied them were no more.²¹ Phillipe Ariès, David Cannadine, and Pat Jalland, have argued that the First World War in particular is a point of rupture: the conflict shattered traditions of Victorian mourning and changed funerary practice as there were no bodies to bury and distraught families began to reject ceremonial burials.²² Yet there is a tension between their arguments, which focus on rupture and impossibility, and arguments of cultural continuity in mourning forms as proposed by historians of the First World War. In *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* Winter argues that, instead of considering the First World War a point of rupture, the conflict instead consolidated previous cultural memorial forms which relied on traditional motifs to lend comfort to the bereaved.²³ Stefan Goebel also took this revisionist line, seeing the First World War as an event that made people reach back into medieval allegories in order to cement the language of the war into one that fit a longer narrative of conflict.²⁴ Adrian Gregory has written about the meaning of Armistice Day and the creation of the two minutes silence, arguing that the silence had its roots in the language of sacrifice which emerged in the late nineteenth century and was repurposed to aid understandings of the First World War.²⁵ These interpretations indicate that, far from memorial forms being created by the war, existing languages of grief were repurposed to aid the bereaved.

Memorial practices, of the kinds which were used in deaths where someone had died from illness or old age, were also used by families where a loved one had died in a mining disaster or through warfare. A key argument among anthropologists has been the role of ritual within personal mourning practices, with the Durkheimian idea of the necessary role that bereavement rituals perform within society contested by those who argue that this view of memorialisation lacks a personal response to death.²⁶ Current scholars, following the pioneering lead of archaeologist Sarah Tarlow, tend to marry the two to argue that both

²¹ James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. xiii; 13–17.

²² Phillipe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (London, 1981), p. 559; Pat Jalland, 'Victorian Death and its Decline: 1850–1918', in Peter Jupp & Clare Gittings (eds.), *Death in England* (Manchester, 1999), p. 251; Cannadine, 'Death and Grief in Modern Britain', p. 218; 241.

²³ Winter, *Sites of Memory*, p. 3.

²⁴ Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, pp. 28–29.

²⁵ Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, p. 169.

²⁶ Toulson & Newby, 'Introduction', p. 3.

personal rituals and set societal ones tend to be combined by mourners.²⁷ Julie Marie Strange has drawn upon this approach and notes the cathartic potential of ordinary death practices, and argues that there are a number of parallels which can be drawn between working class cultures of death in the pre-war years and the rituals developed in wartime: adoptive kin networks, the improvisation of commemorative ritual which is fused with personal mourning, and the development of psychological strategies in response to words and symbols lacking comfort.²⁸ On a more intimate level, Acton draws attention to traditional mourning forms, such as obituaries in newspapers and exchanges of condolence letters, which were supplemented by the addition of extra memorial items during the First World War.²⁹ This thesis draws on the revisionist camp's understandings of mourning practices as fluid, and evolving, sets of rituals which drew on past forms of memorialisation to create complex webs of memorial material which often utilised pre-existing forms and languages of memorialisation.

Aside from Chapter 1, which provides the methodological background for this thesis, the structure of this thesis mirrors the spaces in which families were suddenly thrust by sudden death. Chapter 2 considers both the reasons why mining disaster and First World War deaths should be considered in tandem, while providing an overview of the immediate physical realities of death: families who lost someone in a disaster waited at the pithead whereas those who lost a loved one in the war received a telegram or letter in the home. Chapter 3 focuses exclusively on the home and the private and quasi private rituals, framed objects, and memorial practices which were enacted in this largely private space and over which families had full control. Taking inspiration from Winter's fictive kin networks and Acton's writing of the dead, Chapter 4 explores the ways in which families attempted to spread the news that their family member had died outside of the home to friends, other family members, and interested public bodies. Chapter 5 provides a counterpoint to this and contemplates how families presented their loss to strangers, through notifications in local newspapers and the meanings of these yearly points of family memory. Chapter 6 increasingly turns away from the family as a site of agency and asks how people used objects and ephemera in order to help the bereaved, by raising money and creating commemorative objects which could be used within the home of the bereaved but also within the homes of other community members. Chapter 7 furthers this concept and indicates the complexity of the world in which the bereaved were participating through an examination of mass ephemera and how families, although not the creators of these items, were nonetheless incorporated into these public memorial forms. Family photographs were included in these commercial items, the names of

²⁷ See Sarah Tarlow, *Bereavement and Commemoration: An Archaeology of Mortality* (Oxford, 1999).

²⁸ Julie Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870–1914* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 266.

²⁹ Acton, *Grief in Wartime*, p. 22.

the deceased published widely, and, in the case of mining disasters, photographs of the funerals were transferred onto postcards and sold for profit. The intimate details of family life were repurposed, but nonetheless, intersected with other forms of memorial created by the families themselves. It is in the ephemeral items discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 that an intersection between public and family mourning exists. Different to the split between public and private acts of memorialisation that were focused on during public days of remembrance, the families of the dead were, through the production of mass ephemera, thrust into another type of distinction between personal and public forms of memorial material, one which blurred lines between family and public memorialisation of the dead. Within these *milieux*, into which families were thrust, they nonetheless attempted to gain agency over the memory of the deceased; by creating personal memorial items which would help them mourn, grieve, and form *les lieux de mémoires* within the spaces they could control.

Chapter 1

Mining Family Memories

Uncovering the use of family memorial objects in the home and the emotions that were attached to them is, by its very nature, an inherently difficult task. Due to their distance in time, and the lack of documentation which accompanied commonplace practices, methods of mourning are difficult to reconstruct. While objects and ephemera are a useful way to enter this world of hidden family grief, they too pose methodological challenges. In their introduction to *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War*, Nicholas Saunders and Paul Cornish note that objects of the war exist ‘in a seemingly infinite number of cultural and personal worlds simultaneously, and so can appear as worthless trash, cherished heirloom, historical artefact, memory item or commercially valuable souvenir’.¹ With a personal item such as a war medal, ‘it is often the long tumultuous afterlife of these objects that bestows cultural value as an index of their personal associations.’² This begins to highlight the complex nature of these items: the objects used in the memorial practices are often regarded as unimportant, can be difficult to locate, and are hard to contextualise without the ‘soft’ information which gives them historical meaning, such as object history, information about past use, and memories attached. However, by mining family memories, such as information about personal associations, family narratives linked to the objects, and stories about the memorial practices these objects featured in, important understandings of the use of these memorial items can be found.

For this doctoral thesis, a mixed methodology which focuses on both objects and family memory has been developed to allow intimate details of everyday life to emerge from various types of sources. Two types of research repository had to be created for this doctorate: an archive of memorial objects and an archive of family memories. These two types of source base had to be located, recorded, and meticulously married up to produce a doctoral thesis which rests on a foundation of disparate archives and small family tales which have been integrated to uncover patterns of mourning. This chapter explores the problems inherent to this type of object-based, family-focused research in order to explain how the research material available has shaped the overall thesis and to shed light on the challenges of engaging with such ephemeral material. It provides a brief overview of the current challenges

¹ Nicholas Saunders & Paul Cornish, ‘Introduction’, in Nicholas Saunders & Paul Cornish (eds.), *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* (London, 2009), p. 3.

² Ibid.

confronting the historian of ephemera and objects: the history of collections, cataloguing, and access, before considering how family memories which related to the objects can be recovered and the challenges that this presents: the types of family memory presently in circulation and oral histories old and new.

The first and perhaps most obvious question is: where are memorial objects and ephemera kept and in what kind of repositories do they reside? There are two main places memorial material can be found: first, in family archives, where a memorial item has been kept in the home and handed down through various family lines and, secondly, in collections kept by others: private dealers and institutional repositories, such as archives and museums. The Imperial War Museum, the National Coal Mining Museum, and the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera are the natural places to first look for this type of material, but in no way constitute the total of memorial material available for study. A vast number of different institutional repositories, national and regional, and archival and museum-based, were consulted throughout the research for this thesis. Often, it was found that these archives contain merely a handful of items and objects, many of which are similar to items held in other repositories, although, due to a lack of detailed cataloguing, this is not immediately obvious. Due to the marginal role that ephemera and family memory have played within academia and in terms of collection priorities in archives and museums, these items often tend to be only partially catalogued.³ Archives containing memorial objects and ephemera are scattered; such collections are not always particularly easy to track down, and due to funding cuts and resourcing issues, museums and archives do not necessarily have the money or staff available to catalogue these non-pressing items.

In order to understand how items have been obtained by archives and museums, and before turning to contemporary issues with these repositories, some understanding of how First World War objects, and ephemera more broadly, have been historically catalogued is useful. This knowledge is significant as it indicates both the marginal nature of the material, highlights its perceived past value, and explains the patchiness of current collections. During the First World War, there were some attempts to capture general ephemera as part of a wider attempt to catalogue the ongoing war.⁴ Canadian and Australian officers based in London collected ephemeral material from 1916 onwards and curators at British institutions began to follow their example. These attempts to collect ephemera, such as trench journals and posters, involved both the British Museum and Francis Jenkinson, University Librarian at Cambridge

³ While this is slowly getting better, in general, collections of ephemera are not fully catalogued, or on online catalogues, meaning that they can be difficult to locate.

⁴ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 80.

University, who founded the War Reserves Collection, a collection of wartime ephemera.⁵ Created in 1917, the National War Museum (quickly renamed the Imperial War Museum) regularly requested donations from the public for its galleries and collections of items of ephemera; collections containing objects were sometimes split between the IWM and the British Museum.⁶ Some types of ephemera, such as regimental newspapers, were requested through a notice in the King's Orders in 1914 and deposited in the British Museum.⁷ Other objects, such as a collection of memorial material, were donated by unknown individuals. These formed the basis of many of the collection of First World War ephemera, which in some cases were added to, as in the case of the IWM collections, and in others left as they were in 1919 until the present day (such as the British Museum, now British Library, Tab.11748.aa.(1–4) collections).⁸ Only one volume of First World War memorial ephemera remains in the British Library which, judging by its contents, was largely donated in 1919; however, information relating to its collection has not survived. These early collection efforts were focused on objects and ephemera, not the memories associated with them, and information about the provenance of the donors has not been kept by the various institutions in which the material resides.

Despite these national attempts to collect wartime memorabilia, there was seemingly no sustained attempt to collect memorial ephemera in the interwar years and information about the collection of objects and ephemera remains patchy until the 1960s. Indeed, during the 1930s and 1940s the main repositories of ephemera, the Bodleian Library and the British Museum, revised policies so as not to have to collect as many printed items and liquidated pre-existing collection pieces, some of it being transferred to the Constance Meade Collection of the Oxford University Press, and other pieces being destroyed.⁹ Some of the same factors have also influenced the survival and collection of ephemera relating to industrial disasters. Local slum clearances, for example, affected paper-based ephemera associated with such tragedies. Colin McCourt, a Cumbrian historian who has researched the 1910 Whitehaven disaster, and whose uncle was killed in it, suggests that much memorial material relating to the 1910 disaster was lost in the 1930s. He suspects that many of those who lived in houses rented from the Wellington Pit owners, lost memorial material in the slum clearances in the

⁵ Ann-Marie Foster, “‘I am sending herewith’”- First World War Ephemera at the British Library’, *electronic British Library Journal* (2017), p. 10; John Pegum, ‘British Army Trench Journals and a Geography of Identity’, in M. Hammond & S. Towheed (eds.), *Publishing in the First World War* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 132.

⁶ For example, a set of medals awarded to the winners of the Le Havre vegetable show seem to have been donated to the British Museum and claimed by the IWM at a later point.

⁷ Foster, “‘I am sending herewith’”, p. 10.

⁸ This material was collected by the British Museum and was transferred to the British Library upon its creation in 1973.

⁹ Maurice Rickards, *Collecting Printed Ephemera* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 63–64.

1930s. Before items were allowed into their new homes they had to be disinfected in ‘the bug van’ which is when he thinks much of the memorial material, especially the flimsy, paper-based pieces, were destroyed.¹⁰ The Second World War brought with it paper shortages and, in the midst of enforced attic clear outs across Europe, ‘the period saw one of the greatest paper clear-outs in history.’¹¹ Overwhelmingly the story of the 1930s and 1940s is one of ephemera being destroyed. The collection of ephemera and First World War memorial items from 1945 until the late 1960s is largely unwritten. It is likely that any remaining documents which were not destroyed between 1939 and 1945 were kept by families or were donated into the few archives which would receive them.

The late 1960s marked the beginning of ephemera being recognised as a subject worthy of serious study. During the interwar years, staff at the Bodleian Library had transferred pieces of ephemera they no longer required to the Constance Meade Collection of Oxford University Press, which were saved and cared for by the printer to the University, John Johnson. The Bodleian Library decided to (re)acquire the collection pieces they had donated to the Press collection in 1968.¹² This action formalised the acceptance of the place of ephemera within an institutional library, which had discarded the majority of the material itself, and has since been seen as a key moment in the acceptance of ephemera within the curatorial world.¹³ A fleeting foray into the world of First World War ephemera can be found in the IWM’s decision to exhibit some of their collection of wartime ephemera in 1970, although this seems to have been a one-off event, and public interest in ephemera of the war in general was deemed to be quite low.¹⁴ As part of the wider development of the interest in ephemera, J. E. Pemberton, at the request of the Government Committee of the Social Science Research Council, produced a report in 1971 titled ‘National Provision of Ephemera in Social Sciences’ which concluded that, in order to truly facilitate the study of ephemera, a National Documents Library should be established.¹⁵ No such library has ever been established, nor is there a central database of ephemera held by UK archives. However, the founding of the Ephemera Society in 1975, by a group of enthusiasts and scholars to support the study and collection of ephemera, signalled that it was beginning to be taken seriously as a branch of scholarly enquiry.

¹⁰ Interview with Colin McCourt, 28 February 2018.

¹¹ Rickards, *Collecting Printed Ephemera*, p. 60.

¹² Michael Twyman, ‘The Long-Term Significance of Printed Ephemera’, *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 9:1 (2008), pp. 20–21.

¹³ Ibid., p. 21; John Lewis, *Printed Ephemera* (Woodbridge, 1990), p. 5.

¹⁴ See the exhibition catalogue: Maurice Rickards and Michael Moody, *The First World War: Ephemera, Mementoes, Documents* (London, 1975).

¹⁵ John. E. Pemberton, *The National Provision of Printed Ephemera in the Social Sciences* (Warwick, 1971), p. 47.

The 1970s and 1980s, as well as seeing the solidification of ephemera studies and the establishment of key collections of research material, also constituted key decades for the loss of knowledge, objects, and ephemeral items related to the First World War. Living knowledge of the conflict was lost with the passing of the majority of First World War veterans in these decades.¹⁶ Their contemporaries, brothers, sisters, and wives also passed away and, upon their deaths, many personal collections of objects and personal ephemera relating to family memorialisation, such as photographs, medals, and bronze plaques dedicated to the fallen, were thrown away.¹⁷ Maurice Rickards, a pioneer of ephemera studies, noted that making friends those who worked in demolition companies was key to preserving ephemeral documents, commenting that history can be divided down the middle; ‘half of it is to be found on library shelves, the other half in the world’s waste-bins.’¹⁸ He cited a ticket found in a dustbin lorry in 1972 which belonged to a family of five who had sailed, and died, on board the *Lusitania* in 1915 as the type of important ephemeral item which could be found in waste repositories.¹⁹ During the same period medal dealers, uninterested in the trappings in which medals came, frequently took them out of their original frame and disposed of it, thus obscuring the ways in which they were originally presented.²⁰ These were the key decades in which knowledge was lost: both the living knowledge of those who had lived through the events of the war, their contemporaries (the wives, sisters and brothers of those who died in the conflict), but also of much of the material they had preserved.

The vast majority of memorial material seems to have been donated to archives upon the death of a custodian. Within both categories of material, mining and war related, items which were not collected immediately after the event were kept by families before being donated to institutional repositories at a later point in time. This seems to constitute the majority of items in most archives consulted for this doctoral thesis. Families preserved these often small, normally flimsy, pieces of paper and small memorial objects, and later donated them to museums and archives, or kept them in the family home. This is highly significant: larger collection bodies did not see these memorial items as containing enough cultural importance to seek out, and so they were not systematically collected, or retained, in the same way that other collections were. Even within First World War collections, which had a much more systemised collection policy, ephemeral, memorial items, were not the focus of collection policies. However, memorial ephemera was clearly widespread, and the fact that so

¹⁶ Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London, 2005), pp. 188–200.

¹⁷ Matthew Richardson, ‘Medals, Memory and Meaning’, in Nicholas Saunders & Paul Cornish (eds.), *Contested Objects: Material Memories of the Great War* (Abingdon, 2009), pp. 112–113.

¹⁸ Rickards, *Collecting Printed Ephemera*, p. 18.

¹⁹ Maurice Rickards, *This is Ephemera: Collecting Printed Throwaways* (London, 1977), p. 20.

²⁰ Interview with Harry Taylor, 24 July 2018.

many types of memorial ephemera have survived despite the lack of clear collection policies speaks to its popularity during the early twentieth century.

Scholars of ephemera also face the challenge of deciphering the categorising system used by the cataloguer. Often one has to visit museums and archives in order to search collections through card indexes, paper ledgers, or 'Modes', the cataloguing software used internally within museums to locate items. Yet, simply knowing quite what key words to search, as is true for other disciplines, can be difficult. Commenting on museum practice in the early 1990s, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill wrote that a silver spoon made in Sheffield 'would be classified as 'Industrial Art' in Birmingham City Museum, 'Decorative Art' at Stoke-on-Trent, 'Silver' at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and 'Industry' at Kelham Island Museum in Sheffield.'²¹ This problem is still prevalent within standard archives and in online repositories. For example, searching 'Next of Kin Memorial Plaque', the proper name for the memorial plaque sent by the government to the families of soldiers who died in the First World War, on the Oxford University run Great War Archive produces no results, whereas using the term 'death penny' produces eight results.²² Similarly, typing 'death penny' and 'Next of Kin Memorial Plaque' into Europeana 1914–1918 produces different search results with different plaques being tagged in each.²³ These problems with online catalogues are indicative of the use of museum cataloguing conventions which, given the technology involved, do not need to be adhered to. As Fiona Cameron argues, despite the internet allowing for a different cataloguing approach to be taken, this conversation is only beginning in the museum world.²⁴ On the whole, objects tend to be more comprehensively catalogued than ephemera. Many of the issues of misnaming an item belong to the realm of material culture because ephemera has not been as well catalogued, and so exist in themed boxes containing partially catalogued material which are easier to find. Nonetheless, the definition of memorial items poses problems: in naming them they can become difficult to find, and items may not be picked up in archival searches. This has meant that it has taken much longer than it might have to simply locate items within archives.

In practical terms, this uneven cataloguing of items, and the need to access internal software such as Modes, meant that this doctoral research has relied heavily on archivists to access information about collections. This thesis would not have been possible without the time and interest of various curators and archivists with their vast knowledge of the collections at the institutions they work in. Given the medium of the sources, archivists can be wary of

²¹ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (London, 1992), pp. 6–7.

²² Search of Great War Archive, 24 September 2018.

²³ Search of Europeana 1914–1918, 24 September 2018.

²⁴ Fiona Cameron, 'Museum Collections, Documentation, and Shifting Knowledge Paradigms', in Ross Parry (ed.) *Museums in a Digital Age* (London, 2010), pp. 80–95.

new researchers, because ephemera can easily be lost and objects can break. Often, due to a collection's vulnerability, usually because it has been only partially catalogued, archivists are wary of letting a researcher use the collection and the vetting process was often as much for them to judge knowledge of museological or archive conventions as to discuss the collections. Access to items more generally is a hotly debated issue among archivists currently. Genevive Silvanus notes that archivists do not always give equal access to their collections due to funding cuts, pressure on staff, or because certain items are restricted by law.²⁵ She draws attention to the fact that researchers tend to gain privileged access, although sometimes they only think that this is the case, to certain sets of documents and that varied levels of access are often the norm across the board, relying on individual archives and individual archivists.²⁶ Largely, Silvanus paints a picture of uneven access across archives due to staffing, costs, laws, and individual staff preference.

In light of collections of both memorial ephemera and objects being heavily shaped by past collection policies, and access to them being affected by current archival deficits and curatorial staff, other archives of objects and ephemera were turned to in order to supplement archival holdings. Private collections have been invaluable throughout this doctoral research and the knowledge held by their owners is highly pertinent to the study of the history of certain object-types. Michael Twyman notes that, in part because of the institutional reluctance to engage with ephemera, private collections which are then made available for historians to study are still important repositories of ephemeral material and the ability to work with these private collections is still important within ephemeral studies.²⁷ Private collections can also hold working and middle class family archives, especially when bundles of belongings have been sold together, and have the potential to contain surprisingly rich family sources. In addition, their owners are often rich founts of knowledge themselves. They can discuss general trends, specific materials, and manufacturing methods for items which may have little or no written sources about them. Locating private collectors willing to share their items can be difficult, and it was largely word of mouth recommendations and introductions by those who had helped with other aspects of the doctoral research, archival or oral history based, which led to their inclusion in this thesis. Both the private collection and the collector are invaluable sources of knowledge about specific objects and ephemera; however, they come with a fresh supply of access issues.

²⁵ Genevive Silvanus, 'Privacy, openness and archives in the public domain', Unpublished PhD thesis, Northumbria University (2018), p. 189.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 189–191.

²⁷ Michael Twyman, 'Editor's Introduction', in Maurice Rickards, *The Encyclopaedia of Ephemera* (London, 2000), p. vi.

Yet, the physical archive is not enough, and as this doctoral thesis attempts to re-contextualise objects with their earlier physical environments and emotional associations, the meaning and use of memorial objects are only illuminated when family narratives are married with the physical item. In the case of personal belongings their association with the individual is key. Modern sociological studies have shown that the objects that retain an importance to people are ones that remind them of other people.²⁸ Often family members do not want the memories to become detached from the objects and this fear of loss of memory attached to sentimental objects is highlighted by Margaret Gibson in her study of the everyday objects of mourning in Australia. During her research, Gibson interviewed a woman who commented ‘you can pass on an object ... but can you really pass on the feeling that you have for that object?’.²⁹ While people may not have been able to pass on their exact feelings for the object, they have nonetheless tried to do so in various ways. There are two main ways that families have attempted to link their memory of the object with the physical item: when they donate an item to a museum they pass on their stories about family life and the importance of the object, or, when items remain in the family, they keep memorial narratives alive through the generational transmission of family memory. Traces of family practices also linger in autobiographies and through Mass Observation directives. These memory-banks have been used in this doctoral research and museum paperwork, Mass Observation, and oral histories have all been consulted.

Museum paperwork, in particular, constitutes an especially undervalued source for examining people’s feelings relating to objects. For example, the letters sent to the Durham Light Infantry Collection from the 1970s onwards, in relation to the donation of objects, offer a rich archive of people’s motives for leaving family items to an institution. Although the donors may not have been aware the letters would be kept, there is a sense that they hoped that the memory described would somehow continue to be attached to the object. They wanted the stories they had related to continue to be attached to the objects they had donated. The letters reveal that a fear of losing the object, a lack of family to pass the item on to, or simply that the family did not want it, but did not want to throw the object away, were the main motivations for the donation of family items.³⁰ They also have the potential to reveal complex family dynamics: who controls the archive, how items are passed down through families, and the disruption that this can bring to the family if a linear progression is not agreed upon by all

²⁸ For example see Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, ‘Why We Need Things’, in S. Lubar & W. D. Kingery (eds.), *History from Things: Essays in Material Culture* (London, 1993), p. 27.

²⁹ Margaret Gibson, *Objects of the Dead: Mourning and Memory in Everyday Life* (Melbourne, 2008), p. 41.

³⁰ For a more detailed exploration of this phenomenon see Ann-Marie Foster, “‘We thought the Museum would be the best place for them’ Veterans, Families, and Mementos of the First World War’, *History & Memory* 31:1 (Spring, 2019), pp. 87–117.

members of the same family. Due to the sensitive nature of this type of material, it can take some time to arrange to view this type of administrative paperwork. In addition to letters written by donors, the paperwork written by the donor at the point an item is donated to a museum, the object biography, which charts the history of the item in question, can be of great help to the material culturist. Yet, again, because object biographies are part of an administrative archive, access is not always granted because they can contain personal information about the donor such as name and address. All of this can be redacted if a researcher asks for the document but due to staffing issues this request is not always granted. However, once any personal information is removed from the document, it can illuminate how and where a family received its item. For example, one object biography revealed that a cutlery box, donated to the National Railway Museum in the 1970s, was made out of a piece of one of the railway carriages involved in the Bullhouse Bridge disaster in 1884 collected by the donor's grandfather who had seen the accident as a boy.³¹ However, the object biographies, and letters associated with the object, only go so far in explaining their position and use in the household. While it is very useful in detailing how important a memorial item may be to the family, museum paperwork was not intended to explain how the object was used within memorial practices, and so is limited in what it can offer in terms of how the family object was used in a domestic space in the first four decades of the twentieth century.

In order to attempt to gain insight into the domestic interior of the interwar period, other written sources, such as Mass Observation, autobiographies, and newspapers have been consulted. The 'mantlepiece directive', one of the earliest directives sent out by Mass Observation, which simply consisted of lists of items on people's mantlepieces, contains a smattering of information about how long First World War memorial material stayed in people's living rooms. It provided a valuable resource for understanding whether there was still memorial material present in the late 1930s and its position within the home. This was reinforced by snippets of autobiographies which contain small pieces of information about disaster and wartime deaths and the memorial objects associated with them, which have helped to contextualise the memorial objects further. In particular, the rich vein of mining autobiographies, popular from the 1930s onwards, helped to ensure that comparisons between the First World War and mining deaths could be drawn. So too were newspapers useful in providing an insight into family memorial practices through the 'In Memoriam' columns.

These written sources, although valuable in indicating memorial practices and, to some extent, feelings about them, still lacked the level of detail this doctoral thesis sought to recover. In order to access detailed family memories, oral histories were consulted so rich

³¹ NRM, Object Files, 1976-7973.

family narratives about how war and disaster affected the family could be accessed. These have been the most important sources for understanding how families used memorial objects within the home. When these were married with the general objects discussed, a nuanced understanding of how these objects and ephemera were used in the household could be gained. Pre-existing oral histories were useful in exploring the liminal spaces surrounding mining disasters, and especially in their descriptions of the pithead in the immediate aftermath of disaster. David Selway took a similar approach in some of his own work, and has drawn attention to the six hundred or so oral histories recorded in south Wales between 1972 and 1974, which, although largely focusing on industrial unrest, nonetheless form the basis of a valuable archive ‘for looking at most aspects of life within mining communities – including the dangers of working underground.’³² So too, the Northumberland Archives contain a handful of oral histories which reference how families coped with mining disasters. However, as with the object biographies, this was not primarily the focus of the oral histories, usually any reference to a disaster was part of a much wider life history, and so only small pieces of information tended to emerge from them.

In the light of these encouraging snippets of family history which emerged from past oral histories, it followed that finding family members who had memorial objects and interviewing them was imperative. Of course, these interviews about family memory were subject to the same potential problems any oral history encounters: altered memories, misremembering, and the influence of external memory factors on individual recall are among the issues practitioners regularly find presented to them as part of an interview.³³ Yet, to not use these valuable sources seems an inexcusable waste of knowledge about how families pass down memory of conflict, methodologically problematic as this can be. The interviews with families revealed that many of the families had interacted with modern remembrance practices, especially surrounding the First World War, and the complex family memory types in circulation influenced the ways in which the oral histories were collected. The construction of family memory over the last fifty years is worth considering: we are now far removed from living memory of the war and second and third generation memories are those currently being articulated. These types of family memory are heavily influenced by external factors, all of which have affected the types of narrative offered over the course of this doctoral research.³⁴

³² David Selway, ‘Death Underground: Mining Accidents and Memory in South Wales, 1913–74’, *Labour History Review* 81:3 (2016), p. 191.

³³ See Robert Perks & Alistair Thompson, *The Oral History Reader* (London, 2006), particularly chapters 20–21.

³⁴ This is, of course, the case for all memories being relayed to an interviewer. The work of oral history practitioners has been crucial in enhancing understanding of how memories change over time and through being relayed to an external party. For a particularly good précis of this, see Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London, 2010), especially chapters 3–5.

Since the passing of the veterans of the First World War, and their contemporaries, in the 1970s and 1980s, family memory has been the closest memory type to the war generation's own. As Dan Todman argues, as a result of the death of veterans of the First World War, the cultural memory of the conflict began to be increasingly presented as a homogenised and stable narrative.³⁵ This type of memory presented the war as futile, Western Front-centric, and imbued with pathos and was solidified in the 1990s by new cultural outputs such as *Blackadder Goes Forth* (1989).³⁶ Increasingly, even strong family remembrances of the First World War have been influenced by the solidification of the cultural memory of conflict which occurred in the 1990s. These types of cultural output form the basis of Alison Landsberg's concept of 'prosthetic memory'. Landsberg defines this as 'the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum. In this moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history.'³⁷ These types of emotionally laden experiences, detached from the past, emerged in the 1990s, and prosthetic memory of the First World War is now heavily dependent upon these types of experience. Visiting museum exhibits, such as the IWM's First World War 'trench', and viewing films, such as the 2014 *Testament of Youth*, is now the way that the majority of the populace engage with the conflict and these prosthetic forms of memory increasingly interact with family remembrance.³⁸

Family history is now more popular than ever, and the centenary has brought with it an enormous amount of interest from genealogists.³⁹ As Helen McCartney argues, the two types of family memory currently most associated with the First World War are traumatic memories and forgotten histories.⁴⁰ Although a minority of families retained memories of loss

³⁵ Todman, *The Great War*, pp. 115–120; 144; Jay Winter & Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: debates and controversies, 1914 to the present* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 21.

³⁶ Todman, *The Great War*, p. xii; Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 76; Nóra de Buitelér, 'Under the Magnifying Glass: Investigating the First World War in Recent Crime Novels by Ben Elton, and Jan Eik and Horst Besezky', *The Modern Language Review* 110:2 (2015), p. 366.

³⁷ Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory* (New York, 2004), p. 2.

³⁸ Much like 'historical remembrance' used by Winter, 'family remembrance' denotes the plastic, often prosthetic, memory of the conflict which family members have recreated from cultural narratives. See, Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan, 'Setting the Framework', in Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 9.

³⁹ For work on the rise in popularity of family history see the work of Anne-Marie Kramer, especially, 'Telling Multi-dimensional Family Histories: making the past meaningful', *Methodological Innovations Online* 6:3 (2011), pp. 17–26; 'Mediatizing Memory: History, affect and identity in *Who Do You Think You Are?*', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 14:4 (2011), pp. 428–445; also see Michael Sharpe, *Family Matters: A History of Genealogy* (Barnsley, 2011), p. 2; also Jay Winter, 'The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the "Memory Boom" in Contemporary Historical Studies', *Archives & Social Studies* 1 (2007), pp. 363–397; Jerome de Groot, 'The genealogy boom: Inheritance, family history and the popular historical imagination', in Pedro Ramos & Bertrand Taithe (eds.), *The Impact of History? Histories at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century* (London, 2015), pp. 66–90.

⁴⁰ Helen B. McCartney, 'The First World War soldier and his contemporary image in Britain', *International Affairs* 90:2 (2014), pp. 304–305.

and the impact of this on the family, as McCartney states, ‘for most families ... finding a connection to the First World War is a rediscovery.’⁴¹ Genealogical research into barely known veteran family members tends to reinforce the narrative of pathos and any attempts to understand the war in a broader context tend to rely heavily on the ‘futility of war’ narrative.⁴² A traumatic memory of the war is held by a minority of families whose ancestors fought. As Todman notes, this traumatic understanding of the war is best understood through Marianne Hirsch’s concept of ‘postmemory’; of contemporary family members not having lived experience of the traumatic event but who nonetheless understand it through a combination of surviving family documents and the cultural memory of the event in question.⁴³ Postmemory is key for family experiences of traumatic deaths in the First World War and in these kinds of narrative, as Aleida Assmann notes; ‘[when] communication between eras and generations is broken ... the records of great-grandparents can only be read against the background of orally transmitted family histories.’⁴⁴ The extended legacy of the shock of sudden death was extended in time and forms the basis of family remembrance of the conflict in these traumatic memories. The traumatic memories retained by the families are not the only narratives of the war currently in circulation. Bart Ziino introduces a third category of family memory which is worth considering as an additional form of family memory, in addition to the two McCartney suggests. Ziino, writing about family memory of the war in Australia, notes that the grandchildren of those who participated in the war have positive dynamic remembrance practices which are influenced by popular notions of war but still retain a strong sense of individualism within the family.⁴⁵ He argues that these transmissions of memory are slightly different to Hirsch’s postmemory: instead there are two sets of memory actions, that of the family passing down stories and that of the trauma impacted by the lives of parents and grandparents.⁴⁶ The family memory of the First World War has a tendency, as is true for any generational transmission of memories about an individual, of relying heavily on anecdotal stories and it is in Ziino’s delineation of family memory where this is most evident.⁴⁷

⁴¹ McCartney, ‘The First World War soldier’, p. 305.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: photography narrative and postmemory* (Harvard, 2002), p. 13; Dan Todman, ‘The Ninetieth Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme’, in Michael Keren & Holger H. Herwig (eds.), *War Memory and Popular Culture: essays on modes of remembrance and commemoration* (London, 2009), p. 31.

⁴⁴ Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilisation: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 4.

⁴⁵ Bart Ziino, ‘“A Lasting Gift to His Descendants” Family Memory and the Great War in Australia’, *History & Memory* 22:2 (2010), p. 126.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 133.

⁴⁷ John Gillis, *A World of Their Own Making* (Oxford, 1996), pp. xv–xix; the telling of autobiographical stories in old age is common and helps to preserve this memory being lost upon the death of the owner. See Peter Coleman, ‘Reminiscence Within the Study of Ageing: The Social Significance of Story’, in J Bornat (ed.), *Reminiscence Reviewed: Perspectives, Evaluations, Achievements* (Buckingham, 1994),

There are, therefore, three types of memory transmission which have occurred in the families of the war dead in the last one hundred years: communicative and anecdotal, where family memories are based on the telling and retelling of family stories; ‘postmemory’ approaches, where a traumatic disruption in the family past has wrought a block on families which now remember the dead largely based on objects and documents which remain; and the ‘forgotten’ family history, which largely relies on the same tools as ‘postmemory’ for triggering a response but no associated stories or documentation can be found and this space is largely filled with a culturally dictated memory of the war. These dialogical family narratives of war mean that, for the majority of families, they only have a family remembrance of the conflict. For those who study the family, as Astrid Erll suggests; ‘one of the most interesting questions in studying family history is how culturally available narratives ... shape and or are refracted by family remembrance’.⁴⁸ The level of knowledge contained within these orally transmitted family histories fluctuates depending on the individual families involved. Not all families who lost someone now engage with their memory through the trauma of the past. These processes are also present in the families of those who died in a mining disaster. In a similar way to families who are linked to the First World War through the retelling of tragic stories, so too are families whose ancestors were killed in large colliery explosions.

It is from these families with a strong anecdotal memory of past family happenings that the majority of detail about interwar mourning practices comes from: these families retain stories, recall the history of memorial objects associated with war and disaster, and can sometimes discuss how past family members grieved for the deceased in question. These family memories can be fused to varying degrees of the cultural memory of the war in articulation. Family documents, stories, and cultural memory all influence the narratives now told by ancestors of the deceased. All families experience family remembrance to varying degrees: in families where there is a strong oral tradition, family remembrance influenced by cultural memory is weaker, and in families where their histories have largely been forgotten, the family remembrance articulated by members of the family is heavily based on cultural outputs. However, this has not stopped these families who have no memory of the war but still own memorial objects from responding to the calls for information which were circulated as part of this doctoral research. While these families with ‘forgotten’ histories still often retained family items, they used the opportunity as a way of finding out more about them than necessarily being able to attach a family story to them. These families also attached a much

pp. 8–20; Gillian Cohen, ‘The Effects of Ageing on Autobiographical Memory’, in C. P. Thompson, *et al.* (eds.), *Autobiographical Memory: Theoretical and Applied Perspectives* (New Jersey, 1998), pp. 105–124.

⁴⁸ Astrid Erll, ‘Locating the Family in Cultural Memory Studies’, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42:3 (2011), p. 312.

greater significance to feelings of pathos and the tragedy of war than in families where the dead were still actively remembered. Yet, it was also found that there were deep and rich family narratives of loss and remembrance still in circulation. One family who had lived in the same house as the deceased soldier could track his Next of Kin Memorial Plaque across their walls. Another family showed me that they had placed their Plaque in the hallway because it was always there in previous owner's homes. The complexities of family remembrance, and the ways in which it can substantially differ between different groups of people, highlights how difficult family memory research can be and suggests that, much like tracing archival items, locating articulate family memories of the past was not the easiest of tasks. There were many dead ends, interviews with people who retained no memories of family memorial practices. However, some rich family narratives emerged.

The families interviewed during the course of this doctoral research resulted from months of developing relationships with key gatekeepers, who only acted as mediators between the researcher and the family after an amount of time had passed. Some of the gatekeepers and interviewees were somewhat wary of anyone from the academy, and developing a rapport with both groups of people took some time. While the memories presented, from the gatekeepers and interviewees, were at times fused with wider narratives of war, at other times, distinct family narratives were still available to the researcher. While there may be an articulation of the futility of war, contemporary families are nonetheless sometimes able to describe what family members had felt in the past, although these tales were largely ones of sadness at family loss. The people interviewed during the course of this doctoral research were largely self-selecting. A large proportion of interviewees were members of the University of the Third Age themselves, or knew the leader of the First World War strand of the Washington and Wessington Branch of the U3A. The U3A group they belong to are active remembrance practitioners: the branch covered a bridge with poppies and went on an expedition to France which they filmed. This helped in that they were keen to speak about their experiences, but did mean that a few families who had weaker memories than were perhaps ideal were interviewed. However, through talking to the families (some of whom were featured in the film, now available on YouTube) some detailed memorial stories emerged.⁴⁹ In the families where there was less detail about their ancestor, dominant narratives, reinforced by their trips to French battlefields, were stronger. Comprehensive family narratives also exist in families with a strong mining heritage. Finding people willing to speak about mining disaster deaths was a more challenging undertaking, and it is possible

⁴⁹ Washington and Wessington U3A, 'Wad Thou Gan? Washington Men in the Great War' 11 November 2014, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFviyhRI_Hg (accessed December 2018).

that more family insights would have been granted if the base for this doctoral thesis had been in South Wales. Nonetheless, families with memories of mining disasters, predominantly located in the North East of England, responded to calls for information and word of mouth recommendations and came forward to be interviewed, greatly enriching this doctoral thesis.

At present, families are on the cusp of family memory of the war passing out of their social memory groups. Aleida Assmann notes that although personal memory is lost upon the death of the owner, anecdotes from one's past can be transmitted in the form of social memory, rehearsed within group exchange, and last within a social group for between 80 to 100 years.⁵⁰ The research undertaken for this doctoral thesis has caught some of the last surviving fragments of family memories of those who died in the First World War. Large initiatives such as the transnational Europeana 1914–1918, and national initiatives such as the IWM's 'Lives of the First World War' or the CWGC's (Commonwealth War Graves Commission) 'Lest We Forget', are also attempting to collect these family remembrances before they entirely disappear, capitalising on the centenary as a way of engaging the general public.⁵¹ The online initiatives all ask members of the public to upload their stories and images of memorial items to a website which are then displayed and available for members of the public and researchers to view. These family items are displayed online alongside information gleaned from official repositories such as national libraries, museums, and local record offices.

In undertaking this project, it was hoped that these types of memory-capture website, which heavily feature family objects, might have provided unprecedented access to a wide range of family memories of the First World War and it is notable that barely any material included in this thesis comes from these initiatives. The level of detail associated with an object on these websites was not detailed enough for this doctoral research which focuses on small, intimate, family stories. The amount of information gleaned from an interview for one of these large initiatives, be it online or at one of their roadshow style events, has far less scope for intimacy and detailed questioning than an in-depth, individualised, interview. These initiatives are also far more likely to include a telling of a family memory which does not contain the articulation of anecdotal memories. Some families decided to offer brief anecdotal memories of the soldier in question, but this is seemingly rare across these platforms.⁵² The

⁵⁰ Aleida Assmann, 'Memory, Individual and Collective', in Robert E. Goodin & Charles Tilly (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 210–224; Aleida Assmann, 'Transformations between History and Memory', *Social Research* 75:1 (2008), pp. 213–214.

⁵¹ See, for example, Lyn Lewis Dafis, Lorna M. Hughes, & Rhian James, 'What's Welsh for 'Crowdsourcing'? Citizen Science and Community Engagement at the National Library of Wales', in Mia Ridge (ed.), *Crowdsourcing our Cultural Heritage* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 139–159; also Jenny Kidd, *Museums in the New Mediascape* (London, 2017), p. 86.

⁵² See the grave of Pioneer John Dixon, available at, <http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa/document/8826> (accessed September 2018).

cataloguing style used seemingly led digital donors to be brief and exclude intimate knowledge from their descriptions of the objects they were presenting. For anyone using the websites, the brief cataloguing style presumably led them to be brief in turn and so those who could have offered detailed family knowledge did not because of the structure used in capturing the information. As such, the items on these websites resemble items detached from their memories in a museum, or within a family home that no longer remembers its past. Whether they are so in reality is unclear; families may not have wanted to share their intimate experiences of the items on a global stage; however, this has meant that the information provided by the websites has not been of much use in this doctoral research.

On a smaller scale than these national and international initiatives, the research undertaken for this thesis indicates that deep family memories of war and disaster can be accessed and recovered; however, this takes time and patience. Understanding how family research about the First World War has been interpreted, and how museum and archive policies, as well as personal family histories, have shaped the ways information about personal and family mourning has been stored, is of great importance to understanding not only how this doctoral thesis has been shaped, but also how future research may be undertaken. The liminal status of ephemera as a field of study in particular has led to both patchy collections and the loss of a substantial amount of material. The study of family material, and especially ephemeral and personal family items, has not been classed as a priority for various institutions in the past and still retains a marginal status in many archives today. These collection trends have dictated the type of research which has been undertaken for this doctoral thesis and highlight the difficulty of uncovering ephemeral and family records which relate to the early twentieth century. Uncovering usable material is not impossible, and indeed has been a rewarding challenge; however, both the historian of the family and the historian of ephemeral material is forced to use a myriad of methods to identify likely deposits of material. Sources such as autobiographies, the mantlepiece directive, and museum paperwork have all been turned to in order to relocate intimate details about family life. Oral histories have proved to be the best source of intimate family knowledge, but this research is not without its difficulties. The memory of the First World War is complex, and individual family memories compete with larger remembrances, which can make finding family knowledge of interwar memorial practices difficult as families have lost the memories which were formerly attached to their objects. Two types of archive have been explored: archives of objects and archives of memory. Both comprise disparate sources which have been pieced together in order to recover an understanding of early twentieth century mourning objects and how they were used by families in their grief.

Chapter 2

Mining Disasters and the First World War

The centuries will burn rich loads
With which we groaned,
Whose warmth shall lull their dreaming lids,
While songs are crooned;
But they will not dream of us poor lads
Lost in the ground.¹

In January 1918, a poem by Wilfred Owen, one of only five published in his lifetime, appeared in *The Nation*, a left-leaning periodical. It was written to commemorate the Minnie Pit disaster, which occurred earlier in the month, and had killed 115 men and boys. The irony so characteristic of his poetry was already visible: the subject of the poem is listening to the fire, expecting tales of nature, but instead hears a tale of the pain of those who had given their lives to the mine. He names the ‘dark pits of war’, the subterranean space where miners waged war with death to provide black gold, a direct link to the charnel house of the Western Front he had left. Yet, he was not the first to have made this comparison. During the early twentieth century the dangers inherent within the professions of mining and soldiering were made clear by a number of commentators across public and political spheres. This chapter suggests that workplace disasters, in particular mining disasters, and the First World War provide a useful framework for understanding the impact of sudden mass death on the family when compared. Despite the high loss of life in other professions, mining disasters are perhaps more suited to providing a counterpoint to First World War deaths, although other types of disaster are mentioned where appropriate. The rhetorical and metaphorical linking of the professions occurred throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century, but, there were also practical similarities which lend themselves to comparison between the two: families of men who died in both war or mining disasters were not commonly granted autonomy over the body or gravestones, and funerals were arranged by the men’s employers for both sets of families, be that the state or a colliery owner. These were distinct from other forms of funeral practice and allow for comparisons to begin to be made about the effect of sudden shock and the lack of autonomy over burial rites on family memorial rituals. There were some key differences in the ways in which people mourned after war and disaster. Although not all families had a body to bury after a disaster, many did. This presents a contrast to the First World War where the overwhelming majority of families had no access to a body and only those whose loved one returned home and then died of injuries were given access to their body. Another key

¹ Final stanza from Wilfred Owen, ‘Miners’, *The Nation*, 26 January 1918, p. 538.

difference was the treatment of the families by the media, and this chapter concludes by offering a contextual understanding of this key difference between death in wartime and death in disaster.

The link between warfare and industrial work was present throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century. Miners, seafarers, and those who worked in heavy industry were all acknowledged to be in high-risk jobs. The danger of death or accident was widespread and constant. Although mining, as with all heavy industries, was seen to be dangerous it was no more dangerous than some of the other heavy industries, indeed, sometimes less so.² David Stewart, a maritime historian, has commented that in the early twentieth century mining and seafaring often competed for the most men killed.³ Railways, too, were seen as notoriously dangerous, with the number of small accidents reaching very high proportions at the turn of the century.⁴ It is a fallacy that disasters caused the greatest loss of life in miners, accidents in which just one man died, and industrial diseases were the main causes of death among miners.⁵ However, although some traces of similarity lie in memorialisation practices after individual accidents, such as a tendency to remember the dead via 'In Memoriam' columns, it is the large disasters that shook a community which are to be used as points of comparison here. As Geoffrey Moorhouse showed in *Hell's Foundations*, the loss of a local battalion could be devastating for a local community.⁶ Adrian Gregory, when briefly writing about the 1913 Senghenydd disaster, noted that the 440 men and boys that perished in the blast equated to roughly the ten per cent of national war dead in the First World War but that, in terms of the collective nature of the dead and the fact that they all lived and worked in such a small community, 'no British community suffered loss on this scale during the Great War.'⁷ Lists of streets affected by tragedy echoed lists of the dead in street shrines during the First World War, such as one affected by the 1909 West Stanley disaster, where 'eleven homes have been

² Roy Church, *The History of the British Coal Industry Vol 3* (Oxford, 1986), p. 584.

³ David Stewart, *The Sea their Graves: an archaeology of death and remembrance in maritime culture* (Florida, 2011), pp. 7–10.

⁴ Oliver Betts, Research Fellow at the National Railway Museum, has estimated a peak in the level of rail disasters in the 1860s, but nonetheless railwaymen still suffered a high number of tragedies well in to the twentieth century. Also see the *Railway Work, Life & Death* project run by Mike Esbester between the University of Portsmouth and the National Railway Museum; this is currently the only contemporary work on railway accidents being undertaken.

⁵ Church, *The History of the British Coal Industry Vol 3*, p. 586. The history of death from industrial disease in the UK is only beginning to emerge as a field of research. For forerunners in the field of British and Scottish industrial disease see Arthur McIvor & Ronald Johnston, *Miners' Lung: A History of Dust Disease in British Coal Mining* (Aldershot, 2007); Arthur McIvor & Ronald Johnston, *Lethal Work: a history of the asbestos tragedy in Scotland* (East Linton, 2000); Roger Cooter & Bill Luckins (eds.), *Accidents in History: injuries, fatalities and social relations* (Amsterdam, 1997).

⁶ See Geoffrey Moorhouse, *Hell's Foundations: A Town, its Myths and Gallipoli* (London, 1992), especially pp. 60–79.

⁷ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 279.

bereaved'.⁸ These high concentrations of local deaths, in war and disaster, are indicative of the similarities which could be presented by this sudden and high loss of life.

Those under the age of thirty were disproportionately affected by both war and disaster, and the majority of deaths were men in the first three decades of their life. Jay Winter calculates that 80 per cent of the British Army were under the age of 30 for the duration of the First World War, and that men under twenty-five years old were most likely to be killed in the conflict.⁹ In a mining disaster, such as the one at West Stanley in 1909, nearly sixty per cent of the 169 men killed were under the age of thirty.¹⁰ The Gresford disaster had a similar proportion of dead in their twenties and thirties.¹¹ In mining disasters the death toll for the young was relatively high: those who worked at the coal face, the 'hewers', were fit young men who could maintain pace in a physically demanding environment. Due to this, they were disproportionately affected by explosions: they were more likely to be caught at the coal face, trapped under falling rocks, or become stuck in places beyond the reach of rescue teams. The public was well aware of this trend and local publications often commented on it after a large disaster. In 1909 the 'Consett Chronicle Art Memento', produced after the West Stanley disaster noted, that 'the vast proportion of lads and young men formed one of the saddest features in the great disaster which brought sorrow to so many hearts.'¹² Not only were close communities more likely to be affected by mining disasters and warfare, but demographically the young were far more likely to be killed than older men, adding an extra layer of pathos to the events.

Mining, in particular, was singled out for heavy comparison with warfare both publicly and politically. A speech made in 1909 at a meeting of the Liberal Association in the Town Hall in Bishop Auckland, near the site of the recent West Stanley disaster, by Richard Haldane, then Secretary of State for War, made this comparison explicitly. He declared: 'Death comes to all alike – Kings and their subjects, to rich and to poor, to peer and to peasant. It will come to each of us. May we be found at our posts, as these brave men in the pit were found.'¹³ After the years following the First World War, this association grew even stronger. After the 1927 Ebbw Vale disaster, the *Western Mail* stated that the dead men 'were stricken with a soldier's wounds in a soldiers' battle.'¹⁴ The circulation of such ideas within

⁸ *Western Mail*, 2 March 1927, p. 9; Mark Connelly, *The Great War Memory and Ritual: commemoration in the city and east London 1916–1939* (London, 2002), pp. 25–27.

⁹ Jay Winter, 'Demography', in John Horne (ed.) *A Companion to World War I* (Oxford, 2012), p. 251; Jay Winter, *The Great War and the British People* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 76–83.

¹⁰ Age demographics of the dead from Eric Forster, *The Death Pit* (Newcastle, [1969]), p. 22.

¹¹ Michael Pollard, *The Hardest Work Under Heaven*, (London, 1984), p. 181.

¹² Eleanor Neasham, 'Consett Chronicle Art Memento', (Consett, 1909), p. 7.

¹³ *Durham Chronicle*, Friday 26 February 1909, p. 3; *The Auckland Times*, 26 February 1909, p. 2.

¹⁴ *Western Mail*, 2 March 1927, p. 8.

newspapers indicates that, in principle at least, these ideas were being articulated in the realm of public consciousness. It also highlights the common place of the dead miner in the press. Yet the performative nature of these descriptions should not be ignored. John Woodhead, in his essay about the Bentley Colliery disaster of 1931 commented that ‘heroism, resourcefulness, cooperation, sacrifice, grief, compassion, sympathy, generosity are paraded across the pages [of newspapers], unconditional and unmodulated ... It is Great War journalism revived for the occasion.’¹⁵ Similarly, didactic postcards highlighting the role of the miner were popular during the First World War; a postcard series produced by the Clay Cross Colliery showed two photographs of a miner ‘winning his bread’ (underground) and ‘serving his country’ (in uniform).¹⁶ Another set from the series shows colliers at a training camp. These were seemingly produced by the company to emphasise the patriotic role their employees were undertaking, and presumably to encourage customers to favour the Clay Cross Colliery Company. Regardless of the motivation of the postcard producers, they nonetheless visually linked mining and soldiering, creating a didactic message which associated the two. This was an idealistic image: the highly visual depiction of warfare and mining was far removed from the uncomfortable or dangerous elements of both professions.

The link between warfare and industrial work was also present within the discourse of socialist groups throughout the early twentieth century. Pat Jalland has commented on this descriptive linking of miners and soldiers in the aftermath of the First World War, highlighting the political use of the language utilised in order to describe the mining profession.¹⁷ However, these linguistic comparisons were also present in the years before 1914. As Mike Mantin argues, prior to the First World War; ‘the metaphorical comparison of soldiers and miners was a common feature of trade union arguments for miners’ rights.’¹⁸ Instead of being curtailed or ended by the First World War, these symbolic comparisons grew in popularity and continued well into the interwar years. In 1924 Rhys Davies, MP for Westhoughton, argued that:

There is no duty that a man could ever perform of greater value to the state than that of being a miner ... we shall not be satisfied on these benches until the man is dealt with as generously by the State in his capacity as a worker as he is when he dons khaki or wears a naval uniform.¹⁹

As Susan Pedersen argues, at a point in time when experience of warfare was being used as political currency, Labour activists attempted to emphasise that miners should have similar

¹⁵ John Woodhead, ‘Essay in Oral History: The Bentley Colliery Disaster’, *Labour History Review* (1975), p. 71.

¹⁶ NCMM, YKSMM: 1998.43; YKSMM: 2006.118.

¹⁷ Pat Jalland, *Death in War and Peace* (Oxford, 2010) p. 85.

¹⁸ Mike Mantin, ‘Coalmining and the National Scheme for Disabled Ex-Servicemen after the First World War’, *Social History* 41:2 (2016), p. 163.

¹⁹ Rhys Davies, quoted in Susan Pedersen, ‘Gender, Welfare, and Citizenship in Britain during the Great War’, *American Historical Review* 95:4 (October, 1990), p. 1006.

rights as their dead comrades because of the civic role that they performed.²⁰ In John Newsom's 1936 call to arms over the state of unemployment sweeping the country he argued that, even in the midst of mass poverty, mechanisation in the mines which led to more fatal accidents was symptomatic of the uncaring state: "'the miners', as has been said, 'are always in the trenches.'"²¹

Miners themselves were aware of this analogy between battling against enemies and battling underground for resources and used this language of comparison themselves. One miner, reflecting on his career, which spanned the pre-and-post First World War years, found the numbing quality of the danger inherent within his profession useful when he joined the army. He wrote:

[I] became indifferent to the many dangers in the mine. When someone was killed I might become apprehensive for a day or two, then the incident was completely forgotten. This training was valuable to me during the First World War when men were yielding their lives on a far larger scale.²²

Gregory echoes these sentiments, arguing that 'miners in particular, the largest single component of the male workforce and a substantial component of the Army, had already known a life when any minute could be their last.'²³

Despite these similarities in the danger faced, Gregory warns that this analogy should not be overstated: for soldiers the separation, uncomfortable living arrangements, and traumatic experiences meant that, for all the danger the men were exposed to in civilian life, the experiences of soldiers and industrial workers should not be seen as identical.²⁴ Nonetheless the experiences of their families may perhaps be probed. The way in which miners and soldiers died, and the ways in which their bodies were treated post mortem, display distinctive similarities and were experienced by their families differently, but with enough similarities that comparison can be drawn and tentative suggestions about the nature of early twentieth century mourning after sudden, traumatic, death can be drawn.

Yet, in order to understand these differences between sudden death and everyday experiences of mourning, a brief overview of standard death practices is necessary to contextualise how people reacted to these sudden, violent deaths, characterised by a broken or missing body. Ideally, according to the fictitious Victorian notion of a 'good' death, it would

²⁰ Pedersen, 'Gender, Welfare, and Citizenship in Britain', p. 1006; also see Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 85.

²¹ John Newsom, *Out of the Pit: a challenge to the comfortable* (Oxford, 1936), p. 11.

²² Thomas Jordan, quoted in John Burnett (ed.), *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London, 1974), p. 104.

²³ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 283.

²⁴ Ibid.

occur in the home with family and friends nearby.²⁵ If a miner had died at work, his colleagues would bring his corpse to the house immediately, and there are anecdotes of deceased miners being brought home in wheelbarrows.²⁶ If a miner had died in a workplace accident, the pit was normally closed for a day (it was 'lain idle'), allowing miners to pay their respects to their dead colleague while also ensuring that whatever had killed their co-worker, be it gas or a roof fall, had had time to disperse or settle before going back underground in order to prevent a spate of fatal accidents.²⁷

Once the body was at home, it was prepared for burial. In working class communities, layers-out, people who would prepare the body for burial, tended to come and attend to the body of the deceased. As Elizabeth Roberts explains, these were often practical women, some of whom were paid, others who accepted presents, or others who saw the laying out of the dead as part of their neighbourly or religious duty.²⁸ The corpse would be washed, cotton wool packed in orifices, and dressed in clean clothes, often a nightshirt.²⁹ In working class Lancastrian communities, pennies would be placed over the deceased's eyes.³⁰ Families would announce the death to the outside world by closing the curtains of the home the body was kept in, a Victorian practice which lasted well into the twentieth century.³¹ This was commonly practiced after mining disaster deaths, and reporters would comment on the observance of this custom in news reports.³² Generally, the practice of keeping the corpse in the home until the burial was practiced in most houses until the 1950s.³³ The body was laid out in a downstairs room, in a coffin but without the lid, and in Catholic families, candles may have been placed around it.³⁴ Once the body was laid out, people visited to pay their respects. Roberts's study of death practices in Lancashire reveals that far more people visited the bodies of the dead within their home than attended the funeral, a practice which seemingly continued into the interwar period.³⁵ Funeral parlours were available from the 1930s, and were particularly welcomed by families in new suburbs, however, these were not used by those who died in a disaster.³⁶ Similarly, cremation was not used by those who died in the communities examined

²⁵ Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 19–21.

²⁶ NA, T-029, Acc No. NRO 1033. Mr James Wilson; Interview with Ernest Seed, 27 April 2016.

²⁷ NA, T-028. Acc No. NRO 1028. Mr T Nesbitt.

²⁸ Elizabeth Roberts, 'The Lancashire Way of Death', in Ralph Houlbrooke (ed.), *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement* (London, 1989), p. 194.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ James Stevens Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Newton Abbot, 1972), p. 7.

³² *The Evening Chronicle*, February 18 1909, p. 5.

³³ Peter C. Jupp & Tony Walter, 'The Healthy Society: 1918–98', in Peter Jupp & Clare Gittings (eds.), *Death in England* (Manchester, 1999), p. 262.

³⁴ Roberts, 'The Lancashire Way of Death', p. 197.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 198–199.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

in this thesis: long unpopular with the British public, cremation before 1945 was expensive and by 1939 the cremation rate was just under 4 per cent nationally.³⁷

Funerals took place in a local church after a procession of some kind. In the course of an ordinary funeral in a colliery town, children used to knock on the doors of the other residents, bidding them to the funeral procession. On the day of the funeral the coffin would be taken outside of the house, placed on a trellis or some chairs, and the mourners accompanied the body to the local cemetery.³⁸ The mechanisation of hearses was slow to take hold and in the 1920s and 1930s both motorised and horse-drawn hearses were in use.³⁹ In mining towns a colliery horse, usually a black one, would often be used to pull the hearse to transport the coffin to the churchyard.⁴⁰ If the dead had been a member of a friendly society, the family could expect a large funeral cortege: societies even paid for members to bear the coffin and act as mourners.⁴¹ The wake (sometimes referred to as the 'funeral tea') was held in the home of the deceased and was a reasonably common funeral feature throughout the early twentieth century. Neighbours would often help to prepare food, bought by the bereaved, and help as servers once the family arrived.⁴² Children were the only people, other than family, who attended the wake, and only to ask for a piece of funeral cake.⁴³ Once the funeral was finished, the family remained in mourning. Dark clothes were worn, and members of the family were not expected to socialise overmuch: the period given for grieving a close family member was approximately a year prior the First World War, but was gradually reduced afterwards.⁴⁴ Outward signs of mourning, such as mourning stationery, were used by the family to indicate the lessening of grief and publicly mark the diminished period of mourning they had undergone. The ritual release of the funeral meant that the family could begin to grieve: the dead were talked about, and mementos became sites of memory within family homes.

These funeral rituals relied upon two things: one, that there was a body to inter; and two, that the family had some choice over the way they buried their dead. While there was a set cultural script to follow in the event of a death, and funeral rituals conformed to this, there were nonetheless choices within those predetermined rituals, such as the clothes the deceased was laid out in, or the inscription on their gravestone. In the wake of war and disaster the absence of a body, or the absence of a whole body, was a phenomenon that many mourners

³⁷ Roberts, 'The Lancashire Way of Death', p. 265.

³⁸ NA, T-055. Acc No. NRO 1050. Mrs A Dixon.

³⁹ Julian Litten, *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral Since 1450* (London, 1991), p. 142.

⁴⁰ NA, T-040-041-A. Acc No. NRO T-1043. Alderman Easton Thomas.

⁴¹ Roberts, 'The Lancashire Way of Death', p. 203.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

were forced to negotiate. Both war and disaster had a devastating physical impact upon the human body.⁴⁵ Often the bodies of the deceased were highly disfigured, if not entirely destroyed, by the violent death the individual suffered. These destructive forces upon the human form dictated the adoption of a certain type of burial practice, such as the identification of the man through his personal effects, or delivery of the body in a sealed coffin.

Those who recovered the bodies, military or civilian, were forced to confront the mutilated remains of their colleagues and comrades. Few traces of this are left in oral history recordings, or written in accounts of disasters, but some glimpses of this aspect of the immediate aftermath of death can occasionally be viewed. After the Bentley Colliery disaster in 1931, one miner recalled his horror at being called by a nurse to identify a dead co-worker after the explosion, commenting; 'I daren't look at a man that's been in that bloody disaster', a protest which was reportedly ignored by the nurse who scolded him and led him to identify his colleague.⁴⁶ In an oral history recording about the Pretoria Pit disaster in 1910, one man recalled the effects of afterdamp, a mixture of toxic gases left in a mine after a certain type of explosion which caused suffocation, noting that underground there were 'dead men shoved in tubs, like they were sleeping'.⁴⁷ A fisherman from Norfolk recalled several disasters in his handwritten memoirs; he wrote in emotive terms about one wreck in which two men died, commenting that one man in particular 'died a terrible death', reflecting that 'we have all had a terrible experience, wrecks swept, mates, casks, all gone'.⁴⁸ Survivors of the 1915 Quintinshill Railway disaster were deemed to be particularly traumatised: a troop train carrying members of the 1/7th Battalion Royal Scots crashed into a stationary passenger train, swiftly followed by another ploughing into the wreckage of the first crash, which resulted in the deaths of 227 people, the vast majority of whom were soldiers. The carriages were set alight and rescuers were unable to do anything to help and so were forced to witness the deaths of the victims. Soldiers who witnessed the carnage were quoted as saying that it was worse than anything they had seen in the trenches.⁴⁹

Occasionally, these men discussed their experiences of dealing with traumatic death. During an oral history recording of her life, Elizabeth Saunders explained how her husband, who fought in the First World War, had told her about not being able to bury men properly so that they were felt underfoot.⁵⁰ A survivor of the Lusitania disaster wrote to the sister of a

⁴⁵ George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990), p. 1; Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, pp.17–20.

⁴⁶ Herbert Barber, quoted in Woodhead, 'Essay in Oral History', p. 82.

⁴⁷ NCMM, SR59, Oral Histories, 'Pretoria Remembered'.

⁴⁸ NMM, HIS/8, *Accounts of Wrecks & Disasters Which have Happened on the North Norfolk Coast Since 1860 – By Hon John Harman A Fisherman, an [sic] Native of Welles next the Sea*.

⁴⁹ *The Carlisle Journal*, 25 May 1915, p. 4.

⁵⁰ GA, DWA33, Transcript of recorded interview with Mrs Elizabeth Saunders, 1989.

woman who had drowned, saying that he had tried to help her but could not, confiding ‘I must confess that I cannot get this awful sight [of her drowning] from my mind’ and asking the sister for a photograph of the woman who died, so he could have it copied.⁵¹ Other men attempted to make families feel better about their loss by discussing the rapidity of their loved one’s death. A widow from the Bentley Colliery Disaster recalled the parson telling her about the severity of the burns on those who had survived, saying ‘he’d been through the war, but he’d never seen anything like that for the men to be alive ... [he said] If it’s a consolation, thank God your husband was killed [instantly] like that.’⁵² These glimpses of such horrific experiences were not overly discussed in the sources connected with disasters, but, as with the trend with First World War studies to study the silence of memory, it should be noted that those who attended and survived disaster carried with them these traumatic memories.⁵³ These men sometimes went on to aid the grieving families, perhaps by engraving a memorial glass or carrying a coffin at the funerals, while suffering with the silent trauma of the tragedy.⁵⁴

Despite the concerted efforts of men to retrieve the bodies of their colleagues some families did not have a body of a loved one to mourn at all. Mary Mitchell lost her son, who was aged twenty-five, in the 1910 Wellington Pit Explosion in which 136 men and boys died. It took seven months for all of the bodies to be brought up from the pit.⁵⁵ Mary’s son was one of those sealed in the pit for the duration. She corresponded with colliery officials and the landowner of the site the colliery was located on, Lord Lonsdale, asking them to supply information about the pit re-opening so that she could retrieve the body of her son. She explained that:

Since the dreadful calamity, I have been nearly distraught with trouble I have never had a nights sleep since the dreadful affair happened. If I had any idea when the bodies of the poor victims would be recovered, it might make me a little easier in my mind, and if it be in your power to give me any information whatever, it would tend to relieve a broken-hearted mother’s anxiety.⁵⁶

Another woman, writing to her friend, whose letter was published in the local paper, simply said ‘if they [the wives] could only get them, dead or alive, they are quite prepared to have them any way now.’⁵⁷ After the Gresford disaster in 1934, where no bodies were ever

⁵¹ NMM, AGC/S/27, Letter written by Walter Reinhold Storch.

⁵² Lois Hill, quoted in Woodhead, ‘Essay in Oral History’, p. 80.

⁵³ For recent literature on this see Jay Winter, *War Beyond Words* (Cambridge, 2017); Alexandre Dessingué and Jay Winter (eds.), *Beyond Memory* (London, 2015).

⁵⁴ Harry Clarke, a survivor of the Bentley Colliery disaster who aided with the rescue effort before being brought up from the pit, remembered that he ‘helped to carry Joe Pritchard to the communal grave.’ He was off one week before he decided to return to work, against the wish of his doctor. In Woodhead, ‘Essay in Oral History’, p. 73.

⁵⁵ Gordon L. Routledge, *Black Wednesday: an account of the Wellington pit disaster, Whitehaven, in the year 1910* (Carlisle, 2011), pp. 171–172.

⁵⁶ WA, TCNB 6-71, Letter from Mary Mitchell.

⁵⁷ *West Cumberland Times*, 18 May 1910, p. 2.

recovered, widows and family members wrote similar letters, begging for the bodies to be returned to them.⁵⁸ This was a reasonably common occurrence after mining disasters: the sealing of the pit was not uncommon after large pit fires as they had to burn out before anyone could enter. Similarly, when an inrush of water was involved, such as with the Montagu Pit disaster in 1925, it could take months for the pit to be drained and bodies to be retrieved. This left the families in a state of limbo: they knew that there was a body but had no access to it, making it very difficult to begin to grieve in a standard way by burying the body of their loved one.

In some cases, no bodies, or only a handful nearest to the entrance of the pit, could be recovered, leaving bodies entombed underground. When a body was irretrievable, burial services were spoken over the pit head instead of a cemetery wherever possible. After the West Stanley disaster of 1909, the bodies of two men, John Rodgers and William Chaytor, could not be retrieved. Father Dix performed a private Catholic service for Rodgers in mid-March and the vicar of nearby Beamish performed a public Anglican ceremony at the pit head for Chaytor two weeks later, which, ‘despite the unceasing rain’, attracted hundreds of witnesses.⁵⁹ Whenever possible the nature of the service at the pit head followed the religious preferences of the deceased and their families. Sometimes a mass memorial service had to be performed if many men were entombed below. The Gresford disaster in 1934 is considered one of the worst mining disasters in the United Kingdom; 266 men died and their bodies were sealed in the pit, remaining underground to this day. Only twelve bodies were brought to the surface; one of these five months after the disaster when the sealed pit was briefly opened for examination and one of the rescuers’ corpses could be retrieved from near the pit entrance.⁶⁰ Ithel Kelly, the last manager of the Gresford Colliery, trustee of the Gresford Relief Fund, and local expert on the disaster, thought that the original decision to not recover the bodies was made ‘because to subject the next of kin to viewing someone that they couldn’t recognise, [and] just the badness and the hazards of going through it [the recovery of the corpses], just wasn’t on.’⁶¹ Another explanation was put forward by Margaret Clapper, whose brother had died in the disaster and whose family was visited by the Chief Inspector of Mines, Henry Walker, in the mid-1930s. He explained that recovering the bodies would be too difficult, and that the body of John Clapper, who had worked close to the coal face where the explosion had happened, would have been blown to pieces: ‘he said, “I’m not going to get any [bodies]. I’d rather let it be their grave.”’⁶² This was a highly unpopular decision among the families. Some

⁵⁸ Beverley Tinson, *The Gresford Letters: Aftermath of a Disaster* (Gwespyr, 2009), p. 104.

⁵⁹ *The Durham County Advertiser*, 2 April 1909, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Tinson, *The Gresford Letters*, pp. 31–32.

⁶¹ Ithel Kelly, quoted in Tinson, *The Gresford Letters*, p. 64.

⁶² Margaret Clapper, quoted in Roger Laidlaw, ‘The Gresford Disaster in Popular Memory’, *Llafur* 6 (1995), p. 137.

of the Gresford widows lobbied figures in positions of authority to aid them in their request to bring up the bodies: they dogged conferences set up to discuss the remains, in which the bereaved had no official say, demanding news and making their own views known.⁶³ One woman wrote to request the body of her brother be brought up, saying ‘the shock may be over with some people but it is not over in my home.’⁶⁴ At Wrexham Parish Church eight days after the explosion, about the time when the funerals would have traditionally taken place, there was a memorial service where the first sentences of the burial service were uttered in lieu of a traditional funeral.⁶⁵ A memorial service was held yearly. When the pit closed in 1973, the only part left standing was the pithead which was to act as a monument to the entombed men.⁶⁶ Following a grassroots campaign, led by the sister of one of the entombed men, a public memorial was erected in 1982.⁶⁷

If the body was recoverable, finding a suitable place to keep it until the family could claim it could prove a challenge. After a mining disaster the bodies were transported back to the surface, they were placed in offices or workshops at the pit head until they could be identified.⁶⁸ In contrast, after particularly bad railway disasters, because of the nature of the open space in which the accidents tended to occur, corpses were laid on the ground nearby. After the Quintinshill railway disaster the small cottage which was first used as a mortuary became so full that the remains of the victims were simply laid on the grass and covered in makeshift shrouds.⁶⁹ Since railway accidents tended to be somewhat remote, and without the relatives of the deceased nearby, it was slightly less pressing, as well as less practical, to hide the bodies until they were transported to a mortuary for identification. Similarly, after maritime disasters, because of the remoteness of the families, photographs of the corpses were sometimes taken to aid identification at a later date and so a burial service for the unknown drowned soul could be held without fear they would never find out who the person in question was.⁷⁰ After a pit disaster, it was rather more pressing to cover the bodies of the dead as families would crowd the banks waiting for news of their loved one and, because of the severely damaged state some of the bodies were in, it was necessary to hide them until they were either made more presentable or could be neatly laid out to aid identification by other means.

⁶³ Laidlaw, ‘The Gresford Disaster in Popular Memory’, pp. 135–136.

⁶⁴ Tinson, *The Gresford Letters*, p. 104.

⁶⁵ Pollard, *The Hardest Work Under Heaven*, p. 181.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁶⁷ Laidlaw, ‘The Gresford Disaster’, pp. 136–138.

⁶⁸ NCMM, SR59, Oral Histories, ‘Pretoria Remembered’.

⁶⁹ DGA, D37524.

⁷⁰ NMM, HIS/8, *Accounts of Wrecks & Disasters Which have Happened on the North Norfolk Coast Since 1860*.

If a body was damaged beyond recognition, usually because of fire, a particularly heavy rock fall, or because they had begun to decompose, items found on the corpse might be used as an identification tool. They were placed on top or near the covered body and family members could then identify their loved one from these, often scant, personal effects. As one reporter commented; ‘proof of death is sometimes simply a tobacco pouch or pipe.’⁷¹ After the Senghenydd disaster in 1913, the rescuers would call the name of the person they thought it was and this was verified by the items on top of their coffin.⁷² This level of destruction on the body was, if anything, more pronounced during the First World War.⁷³ After the First World War, items found on bodies were used to identify those whose grave markers or identity discs had gone missing during the conflict, and families wrote long descriptions of their loved one’s possessions and facial features to help those in charge of identifying the dead.⁷⁴

Such practices sometimes resulted in several families claiming the same body; prolonging their suffering and adding an extra layer of pathos to the proceedings.⁷⁵ After the Ebbw Vale Disaster in 1927 Robert Wilfred Button was mistakenly identified as Charles Monaghan and was laid out in the Monaghan family home, awaiting burial, until the family realised their mistake a couple of days later and returned him to the correct family.⁷⁶ In the aftermath of the First World War cases of mistaken identity also occurred, often after soldiers swapped personal effects.⁷⁷ In a large disaster these sorts of mistakes were not uncommon, and the added trauma caused by cases of mistaken identity can only be guessed at; however, the vast majority of families received the remains of their relative without misidentification.

The remains of the deceased being brought into the home was not always a straightforward process, and just because the body of the family’s loved one was returned to them did not mean that all members of the family recognised them as such. After the Pretoria disaster in 1910, Mrs Monks recognised her brother Billy by the ‘tommy tin’ on his belt.⁷⁸ As the body was in such a poor state the coffin holding Billy’s remains was sealed, which was not unusual when the body contained the potential to be highly upsetting to the family, and the body returned to the family home. Mrs Monks’s mother, when confronted with Billy’s remains, ‘wouldn’t let him come in because it were a big coffin, wouldn’t let him in, they said

⁷¹ *The Carlisle Journal* 28 May 1915, p. 9.

⁷² GA, DWA33, Transcript of recorded interview with Mrs Elizabeth Saunders, 1989.

⁷³ Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (London, 1996), pp. 212–215.

⁷⁴ CWGC, efile AA 10143, Captain H E Chapman, letter from Mrs E G Chapman, 14 August 1919.

⁷⁵ After the West Stanley Disaster three families tried to claim the body of one man. *The Evening Chronicle*, 19 February 1909, p. 5.

⁷⁶ *Western Mail*, 4 March 1927, p. 5.

⁷⁷ CWGC, efile, AA 4448, Pte T Finnegan, letter from the Officer-in-Charge Base Records, Melbourne, 24 August 1933.

⁷⁸ NCMM, SR59, Oral Histories, ‘Pretoria Remembered’.

it's not my lad, it's too big... I don't convince [sic] it's me lad.'⁷⁹ It was only with some persuasion that she finally accepted that it was Billy's body in the coffin and allowed her son inside.

For the families who insisted on viewing the corpse, it had the potential to be an upsetting experience. After the 1913 Senghenydd disaster, one wife insisted her husband's coffin be opened and his daughter, who was ten years old at the time, later remembered that 'he was perfect except the skin had peeled off his face ... The skin had peeled off his face but it was my father.'⁸⁰ The linking of the corpse to the individual could be highly traumatic, some railed against the idea that the one in the coffin was theirs while others demanded proof, and it was not always accepted, even when the corpse was in the house, that the deceased was truly their relative. And yet these were some of the luckier families; after corpses had been left underground for some time before being brought up, the coroner often advised against them being returned to the families, and they were buried directly without being taken back to the family home for the customary period of time.

The acceptance of the body without being able to see, or being advised against seeing, the remains is in some ways comparable to the reception of bodies in the First World War. The choice not to repatriate bodies after the First World War was highly controversial, and strongly resisted at the time. However, families who already did not necessarily have autonomy over the body would have been used to this process of officials taking away agency from them.⁸¹ While the families of those who died in a disaster were often able to fill a physical cask with remains, they could not necessarily see or touch them and those whose loved ones were in sealed pits were denied even this small comfort. The decision not to repatriate bodies of the dead was announced in 1918. The Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in 1960, was placed in charge of locating, burying, and maintaining the graves of the imperial war dead. The IWGC began as a charitable association, working closely with the Red Cross, but became incorporated into the Army and was given increasing powers until it was granted Commission status in 1917.⁸² The decision not to repatriate the British war dead led to a vicious post-war public debate over who should get to choose where the dead were buried. Sarah Ann Smith, whose only son died in 1918, founded the British War Graves Association in 1919 to lobby for the repatriation of the war dead. By 1922 the association had over 3,000 members, nearly all of whom were based in

⁷⁹ NCMM, SR59, Oral Histories, 'Pretoria Remembered'.

⁸⁰ GA, DWA33, Transcript of recorded interview with Mrs Elizabeth Saunders, 1989.

⁸¹ CWGC, Acc No. WG 783 Pt 1–2.

⁸² Philip Longworth, *The Unending Vigil* (Southampton, 1967), pp. 1–28.

Yorkshire (Smith lived in Leeds).⁸³ In a petition sent to King George V, asking for bodies to be repatriated to those willing to pay for this service, those who proffered their names also highlighted the deceased's relationship to them, with brothers, husbands, and nephews all appearing in the list.⁸⁴ This attempt to humanise the petition was a deliberate way of highlighting the sheer number of people affected by the decision on a personal level. Ultimately the petition was ignored; although the IWGC was forced to produce literature to support its decision. They commissioned Rudyard Kipling to produce *The Graves of the Fallen*, a pamphlet sent to every next of kin explaining what the IWGC did, why it did it, and that to move the bodies would be 'a violation... of the desire of the dead themselves.'⁸⁵ By invoking the wishes of the dead they attempted to circumnavigate any criticism from the families, albeit with limited success.

The uniformity of the war graves was paramount to the IWGC's mission: the remains of those who died should rest, undifferentiated from one another; class, race, and religious boundaries minimised through the distinctive IWGC headstone.⁸⁶ This largely stemmed from the 1918 Kenyon Report, the response of Sir Frederic Kenyon, Director of the British Museum and adviser to the Commission, which emphasised that 'equality of treatment' should be key.⁸⁷ The Commission, following his recommendations, provided uniform headstones decorated with the relevant regimental crest and with the soldier's rank, name, and date of death. These replaced temporary wooden grave markers, which were photographed and sent to the families if they so desired, replicating a Victorian tradition where photographs or drawings of a grave site were taken and sent to relatives unable to visit in person.⁸⁸ Gravestones were provided free of charge and were put in place unless a family had managed to already erect a private gravestone before the IWGC had. Additional inscriptions of up to 66 characters were allowed at the family's own expense, barring some families from participating in this, such as the wife of Pte J. B. Slipp, who could not afford the extra expense this incurred.⁸⁹ However, these inscriptions were heavily monitored by the IWGC and requests for inscriptions not in keeping with the Commission's outlook were regularly refused.⁹⁰ The Kenyon Report commented on

⁸³ Alison S. Fell and Susan Grayzel, 'Women's Movements, War and the Body', in Ingrid Sharp & Matthew Stibbe (eds.) *Women Activists between War and Peace* (London, 2017), p. 232.

⁸⁴ CWGC, WG 783 Pt 1. Petition [1919].

⁸⁵ Rudyard Kipling, *The Graves of the Fallen* (London, [1919]), p. 15.

⁸⁶ Thomas Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: a cultural history of mortal remains* (Princeton, 2015), pp. 463–464.

⁸⁷ Frederic Kenyon, 'War Graves: How the Cemeteries Abroad will be Designed', (London, 1918), p. 7.

⁸⁸ Pat Jalland, 'Victorian Death and its Decline: 1850–1918', in Peter Jupp & Clare Gittings (eds.), *Death in England* (Manchester, 1999), p. 247.

⁸⁹ CWGC, efiles, Pte J B Slipp, letter to IWGC, 12 February 1920.

⁹⁰ Sonia Batten, 'Memorial Text Narratives in Britain, c.1890–1930', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (2011), p. 196.

this possibility, explaining that ‘it is clearly undesirable to allow free scope for the effusions of the mortuary mason, the sentimental versifier, or the crank’ but instead a small personal inscription, paid for by the family, ‘of not more than three lines’ would be allowed; although the Commission was to have ‘absolute power of rejection or acceptance.’⁹¹ As Sarah Turner has suggested, the Commission felt that the ‘proper’ place for personal memorialisation was in the villages of the fallen, not in military cemeteries abroad.⁹²

As much as the IWGC insisted that families could personalise the message on the gravestone, in practice requests to do so were not always particularly well received. In 1920, the IWGC contacted the parents of Jack Mainwaring to ask if a memorial cross could be erected in the British cemetery in which he was buried. The parents agreed to this on the condition that his rank be excluded from the headstone.⁹³ This caused some official trouble and after several internal discussions it was decided that, as there was one existent precedent of a family omitting rank, it would be accepted in this case and a letter was sent to Jack’s parents informing them of the decision.⁹⁴ However, in June 1921, just before the gravestone was about to be engraved, a letter from the Principal Assistant Secretary was sent to Mainwaring’s parents asking them to consider the matter further. It was argued that:

The impression gathered by anyone visiting the cemetery, reading the inscription as you propose to have it, might be that he [Mainwaring] was reduced in rank and it was desired to conceal this fact. At best the omission of the number and rank, particulars which appear on all other headstones erected over War graves, might be regarded as due to carelessness in engraving the headstone. I feel myself it is hardly fair to the memory of your son himself, nor to his comrades, to suppress what might be called his military identity.⁹⁵

This complete reverse in attitude towards the parents’ autonomy and their control over the gravestone led the parents of Second Lt Mainwaring to change the inscription. Mainwaring’s father replied explaining that ‘although both my wife and myself would prefer our sons [sic] rank not to appear on the headstone on reading your letter we think it only right to leave the matter entirely in your hands’.⁹⁶ The Principal Assistant Secretary replied, saying that ‘this is a matter to which the Commission has given serious thought’ and further attempted to legitimise their decision by invoking the ghost of their son by stating that it was ‘in the interest

⁹¹ Kenyon, ‘War Graves’, p. 10.

⁹² Sarah Turner, ‘The poetics of permanence? Inscriptions, memory and memorials of the First World War in Britain’, *Sculpture Journal* 24:1 (2015), p. 89; Hanna Smyth’s doctoral research indicates how families from the Commonwealth could engage with personalising the graves by sending postcards, for example. See Hanna Smyth, ‘The Material Culture of Remembrance and Identity: South Africa, India, Canada & Australia’s Imperial War Graves Commission Sites on the Western Front’, Unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford University, (2019).

⁹³ CWGC, efile SL18509, 2nd Lt JL Manwaring, letter to Major Stoddard, 17 December 1920.

⁹⁴ CWGC, efile SL18509, 2nd Lt JL Manwaring, Letter to HT Manwaring, 31 December 1920; Memo 28 January 1921.

⁹⁵ CWGC, efile SL18509, 2nd Lt JL Manwaring, Letter to HT Manwaring, 3 June 1921.

⁹⁶ CWGC, efile SL18509, 2nd Lt JL Manwaring, Letter to IWGC, June 1921.

of the dead themselves.’⁹⁷ This official reaction to the personal wishes of the parents helps to highlight the tension which ran through this memorial initiative. It signalled that, although the parents were the private holders of their son’s memory, both publicly and bureaucratically, the state, through the Commission, decided that his military status trumped the parental decisions made.

The families of the deceased had a noticeable lack of autonomy over the burials after mining disasters. At the turn of the century colliery owners paid for funerals after mining disasters without any meaningful consultation with the families as to the right way to bury the men.⁹⁸ After the Workmen’s Compensation Act was introduced in 1897, employers were legally required to provide some form of financial remuneration, with a minimum of £150 per person killed, and payment for the funerals often came out of this money.⁹⁹ Coffins, sometimes of a quality the family may not have been able to afford on their own, were provided and intricate details decided on the behalf of the victims. The traditional ‘knocking up’ to alert the town a funeral was to take place and the use of the colliery horse were not needed in the case of large disasters: pallbearers were numerous and funeral directors were employed by some colliery owners, bringing with them their own horses.¹⁰⁰ If the men in question had come from a different village they tended to be taken back to their village for burial and the family seems to have had slightly more autonomy over these types of burials.¹⁰¹ If the family insisted, individual burials could be held, at the family’s expense. Most families allowed burial by the employers, although this may have been because they did not have the money to make alternative arrangements.

The owners of the mines often made conciliatory gestures at the funerals. At the mass funerals of the West Stanley victims the brothers Burn, who owned the pit, and who had paid for the funerals, placed wreaths upon each of the 164 graves with a card bearing the words ‘From the owners of West Stanley Colliery, with deepest sympathy’.¹⁰² The Urban Council erected small posts, with names attached, as a form of temporary gravestone.¹⁰³ After providing sustenance for the rescuers and the waiting crowds, and visiting the pit head, these

⁹⁷ CWGC, efile SL18509, 2nd Lt JL Manwaring, Letter to HT Manwaring, 8 June 1921.

⁹⁸ John Benson, ‘Coalminers, Coalowners and Collaboration: The Miners’ Permanent Relief Fund Movement in England, 1860–1895’, *Labour History Review*, 68:2 (August, 2003), p. 182; John Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1989), p. 178.

⁹⁹ John Benson, ‘Colliery Disaster Funds, 1860–1897’, *International Review of Social History* 19:1 (April, 1974), p. 73; Catherine Welsby, “‘Warning as to her future behaviour’: The Lives of the Widows of the Senghenydd Mining Disaster of 1913’, *Llafur* 6:4 (1995), p. 95.

¹⁰⁰ One of the rare examples that survives is the records of the funeral director who dealt with several of the victims of the Ebbw Vale disaster in 1927. GwA, Acc No. D3335.3.

¹⁰¹ For example, after the West Stanley disaster there were some victims interred at Tow Law and one in the local village of Shildon.

¹⁰² *Durham Chronicle*, 5 March 1909, p. 11; *Durham County Advertiser*, 5 March 1909, p. 7.

¹⁰³ *Consett Chronicle*, 5 March 1909, p. 6.

gestures of sympathy with the bereaved families at the funerals marked some of the last interactions the pit owners would directly have with the families of the deceased. The gestures were small public tokens that cemented their role in the locality: they performatively offered support in a form that was expected by the community, with a sentiment that was not necessarily reflected in monetary terms, providing more of an empathetic presence than a practical one.

As with wartime deaths, mass graves, sometimes referred to as ‘communal graves’ among the miners, were heavily utilised.¹⁰⁴ Local cemeteries donated space, although in the case of the Senghenydd Disaster in 1913, the local council needed to create a new cemetery to deal with the sheer number of burials.¹⁰⁵ After the West Stanley disaster men were buried forty abreast in trenches dug in the local graveyard. After the Quintinshill disaster the men of the 1/7th Bn Royal Scots were transported back to Edinburgh to be buried in a mass grave which was then cared for by the regiment.¹⁰⁶ There has been a recent trend of comparing these colliery trenches with pauper graves. Jalland contends that families who lost a loved one in a mining disaster were afraid of the mass burial because of the association with a pauper death.¹⁰⁷ Roberts notes that a pauper’s funeral, paid for by the parish, was to many working class families, ‘to bear a lifetime’s stigma.’¹⁰⁸ Yet, Julie Marie Strange’s description of a pauper burial, where ‘the grave was little more than a hole into which the bodies of the abject poor were packed in flimsy coffins, with little or no ceremony’ is a far cry from mass burial practices after disasters where large processions would accompany the dead to their final resting place.¹⁰⁹ Joanna Bourke has drawn attention to First World War burials and their likeness to pauper ones, arguing that ‘mass burials on the battlefields were “common internments”’.¹¹⁰ If anything, wartime burials were more similar to pauper ones than any internment after a mining disaster; because the danger of burying men at the front meant that often only a shallow grave was dug, men were interred fully clothed as there was nowhere to prepare their bodies for burial, and only basic funeral rites were read.¹¹¹ A large part of the trauma of this burial was the lack of headstone or grave marker for the family to visit. This lack of a gravemarker has been similarly discussed by one of the great-nephews of a miner who died in the Whitehaven disaster in 1910, who recalls being taken to visit his great uncle’s grave when he was young. He was ‘told roughly where Thomas was buried. There was no

¹⁰⁴ Woodhead, ‘Essay in Oral History’, p. 73.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with members of the Aber Valley Heritage Group, 16 June 2017.

¹⁰⁶ NRM, Object Files, Acc No. 1984-7504.

¹⁰⁷ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁸ Roberts, ‘The Lancashire Way of Death’, p. 191.

¹⁰⁹ Julie Marie Strange, *Death, Grief and Poverty in Britain, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 7.

¹¹⁰ Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 219.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

actual grave, just a [sic] area of grass which was where the mass burials took place. So not even an headstone!!'¹¹² Headstones may move over the decades, but it is suggestive that some burials for disaster victims may not have had markers which may have depended on the colliery owner in question who would traditionally provide one. The Whitehaven disaster seems to be the only example of there being no gravemarker whatsoever for the dead. In nearly all of the disasters observed during the course of this doctoral research, communal graves do not seem to have been particularly resented by the families of disaster victims; indeed there seems to have been either a weary resignation about their use or a small amount of comfort from the fact that the men were buried alongside one another.

Funerals were also organised after munitions explosions which happened during the war. After the Silvertown explosion in 1917, in which seventy three people died, it was decided by the London Burial Board that a portion of the City of London cemetery would be set aside for the mass burial of victims, at no charge, and a funeral procession was meticulously planned for four select victims; Sub-Officer Vickers, Fireman Sell, Winifred Sell and 'the infant child of Fireman Betts'.¹¹³ The event was ticketed and only select members of the local community were allowed into the church, mostly local dignitaries and those who had aided in the aftermath of the explosion.¹¹⁴ Once again, the pomp and ceremony of the burials alleviated the fact that they were experiencing what could otherwise be perceived as a shameful pauper burial. However, much like a pauper funeral, the families of the dead were not allowed a voice in the immediate commemoration process: instead this was often decided by the owners of the colliery or, in the case of the Silvertown explosion victims, the civic body in which they resided.

A widow of the Bentley Colliery disaster, in an interview forty years after the disaster, recalled the lack of autonomy she had over decisions regarding the funeral, and her experiences are worth quoting here in some detail:

I remember Mr Ballam of the Union asking us different things. Were we agreeable for this mass grave and the memorial? I know it was all taken out of our hands as regards the funeral. Mr Swan had that grave dug, and he lined it all with ivy and laurel. He said his biggest fear was the grave giving way, because they stampeded it. Massed bands; every denomination. It's a terrible ordeal. Len's mother, she said she couldn't go to the funeral if she couldn't see him. So me dad asked, and Dr Dunner, the Health doctor, said he couldn't be seen again. They said, 'You'll see him if you get your own undertaker.' Well, she never forgave my dad for a bit. It seemed to turn her brain. She couldn't believe that he was dead if she didn't see him, she said. We had to console her, anyway, and we got her round. We had mounted police to get us back. It were such a crowd. They were sitting on roofs and all sorts, going down there.

¹¹² Interview with Colin McCourt, 28 February 2018.

¹¹³ NeA, Silvertown Box 1, Order of Service for Sub-Officer Vickers et al; Letter from W P Bicknell, 25 January 1917.

¹¹⁴ NeA, Silvertown Box 1; ticket for the Public Funeral Service; plans for the funeral.

We were four hours from Winnipeg Road to Arskey cemetery. There were such a lot. It's curiosity, a lot of it. Sympathy, too.¹¹⁵

Later in the interview, she recalled a 'fellow there came and took photographs. My younger brother was with me. I told him off. Well, who wants taking standing on a grave like that?'¹¹⁶ Hill's memory of the experience, that the family were, in theory, consulted about the burial but that any decisions were entirely taken away from them, did not necessarily seem to cause her upset. Presumably cost prevented her mother-in-law from hiring an undertaker so that she could view her son's body again. The same cost may therefore have been the reason why the deceased was buried in a shared grave at the expense of others.

As Hill's recollections demonstrate, the funerals themselves were highly popular affairs. Thousands flooded into villages and towns on the days of the funerals. This followed on from the keen public interest in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, and at times the observers hindered police and volunteers bringing rescue supplies to the pithead.¹¹⁷ As one survivor of the Bentley Colliery disaster (1931) put it 'they'd come down in bloody crowds... you couldn't shift for them.'¹¹⁸ The first Saturday after the West Stanley disaster, 131 men were buried. The *Durham Chronicle* estimated that between 70,000 and 80,000 people were in attendance, and *The Auckland Times* that the number of attendees reached nearly 200,000.¹¹⁹ Special trains were run by the North-Eastern Railway Company to accommodate some of the increased traffic into the village, twenty five ambulances were placed on hold in case of emergencies in the crowd, and over one hundred policemen were in attendance.¹²⁰ Even after a disaster which incurred a smaller loss of life, such as the Washington Glebe Colliery explosion in which fourteen men died, the number of observers at the funeral nearly reached 20,000.¹²¹

The sheer number of attendees of the funerals of the victims begins to indicate the highly public spaces in which these traumatic experiences and rituals of loss were taking place. Among a milieu of the helpful, the commercially interested, and the inquisitive, family members had to come forward, identify their dead, and begin to mourn. Those involved in the commercial press flocked to the site of the accident, as well as those wishing to offer aid, or those who wanted to simply witness what had happened. These responses varied from small, local companies, to large press companies, such as the Topical Press Photographic Agency,

¹¹⁵ Lois Hill, quoted in Woodhead, 'Essay in Oral History', p. 81.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Stanley Williamson, *Gresford: The Anatomy of a Disaster* (Liverpool, 1999), p. 10.

¹¹⁸ Percy Davy, quoted in Woodhead, 'Essay in Oral History', pp. 73–74.

¹¹⁹ *Durham Chronicle*, 26 February 1909, p. 4; *The Auckland Times*, 26 February, 1909, p. 7.

¹²⁰ *Durham Chronicle*, 26 February 1909, p. 4; *Durham County Advertiser*, 19 February 1909, p. 8.

¹²¹ *Durham Chronicle*, 28 February 1908, p. 5.

who were involved in the dissemination of images after the West Stanley disaster.¹²² A rare visual record of the immediacy of this was after the Quintinshill railway disaster where a passing photographer took a picture of bikes abandoned in the hedgerows from people who had cycled to observe the scenes.¹²³ Some of those who came to witness disasters included young children. Ivor Jones, a colliery official at Seven Sisters, South Wales, for the majority of his working career, noted that his first impression of life ‘in its tragedy and its blessings’ was the Senghenydd explosion when he was about five years old. His father was a regimental Sergeant Major and they lived in Abertridwr (a mile and a half down the valley from Senghenydd) at the time of the explosion. He recalled going to view the aftermath of the explosion, saying ‘we were allowed, as children, very young then, to go as near as possible to the mine. And I could see those men brought up. And that gave me an awful feeling.’¹²⁴ He realised many years later that medics were sending some men to the side, and they were the ones who had died in the pit, ‘the dead was being piled up. The women were crying, my own mother among them, but we had nobody underground as it happens, but every woman was crying ... all the ministers were all helping out’.¹²⁵ This mixture of young and old onlookers, both related to the disaster and completely separate to it, was present after most major disasters during the early twentieth century and formed the backdrop for individual loss.

The particularly traumatic nature of these events was recognised by aid workers and people from the Salvation Army, the local church, and St John’s Ambulance, who often comforted the bereaved. Professional periodicals, such as the *First Aid Journal*, commented on the quality and rapidity with which first aiders reached the scene and gave mention to those who played particularly prominent roles in organising the response as a way of highlighting best practice in disaster response.¹²⁶ Members of the Salvation Army were also quick to respond. After the West Stanley disaster, Salvationists prayed with those waiting at the pit head and visited the homes of the bereaved after the bodies had been brought up and the funerals conducted.¹²⁷ This was a fairly typical response from the members of the Salvation Army: they prayed, offered comfort, and at times offered practical help to those in need, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare.¹²⁸ This form of disaster management was commented on

¹²² George Nairn, private collection. The Topical Press Photographic Agency, created in 1903, relied on agents to photograph significant new stories and in 1929 had 1,450 agents working for them worldwide. See, Sarah McDonald, ‘Going Worldwide’, *Black and White Magazine* 17 (2003), p. 94.

¹²³ DGA, D37524.

¹²⁴ SWCC, VID/18, Ivor Jones.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ For example, the *First Aid Journal*, an independent journal for the ambulance and fire services often included a small section on the response to recent disasters.

¹²⁷ *The War Cry*, 27 February 1909, p. 3; 6 March 1909, p. 11.

¹²⁸ *The War Cry*, 25 October 1913, p. 8; 13; Ivor J Davies, *Memories of a Welsh Physician* (Aberystwyth, 1959), p. 91.

in professional journals, and the Salvation Army's Journal *The War Cry*, and helped to develop best-practice scenarios for future accidents.

Despite these calming influences on the scene, newspaper reporters focused on the horrific physical damage inflicted by the disaster in graphic detail. Jalland, in her work about mining disasters, comments that there was 'no massive media intrusion... the press did not intrude on individual sorrow, nor did they pay much attention to the bereaved.'¹²⁹ This is worth unpicking; there were incidences where the press entered people's houses, commented on the grief of certain individuals, and described the state of the bodies of people's loved ones in some detail. There were no in-depth interviews with the bereaved as one might expect now, but the level of intrusion into the homes and lives of the recently bereaved was still notable. As Roger Laidlaw notes in his study of the Gresford disaster in popular memory, 'press coverage is what manufactures public tragedies.'¹³⁰ Both Laidlaw and David Selway, the only two historians to have written about the popular memory of mining disasters in the South Wales coalfield, note the polarised nature of the press when reporting on miners' issues. They comment that the press either cast miners as the squalid provincial, political, and stubborn, or as the brave miner who fought to save their comrades in epic underground battles.¹³¹ This was a matter of some contention for the miners: the outpouring of grief after a few large disasters felt somewhat hypocritical in light of the lack of press coverage when miners were dying every day, or when compared to the hatred towards miners when they organised strikes in an attempt to gain safer workplaces.¹³²

Despite the proclamations of miners as heroes in the immediate aftermath of disaster, the treatment of the mode of death differed in press reports of war and disaster. The wartime cliché of 'he died quickly and painlessly', although acknowledged by the majority of the population to be inaccurate, nonetheless lies in stark contrast to the gruesome details offered by the local press both before and after the war years in relation to mining disasters.¹³³ After mining disasters it was not uncommon for newspapers to reprint the findings of the inquiries in some detail. After the West Stanley Disaster comments about the state of the bodies, with 'parts of their heads blown away', and other graphic details, were published in local newspapers.¹³⁴ The *Consett Chronicle* went as far as publishing a list of the dead with the cause of death next to the name underneath giving such intimate details as 'in some cases the

¹²⁹ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 86.

¹³⁰ Laidlaw, 'The Gresford Disaster', p. 127.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 128; David Selway, 'Death Underground: Mining Accidents and Memory in South Wales, 1913–74', *Labour History Review* 81:3 (2016), p. 201.

¹³² Ibid., p. 202.

¹³³ Michael Roper, *The Secret Battle: Emotional Survival in the Great War* (Manchester, 2009), pp. 213–214.

¹³⁴ *The Auckland Times*, 19 February 1909, p. 5; *The Evening Standard*, 18 February 1909, p. 5.

mouth and nose appeared filled with coal dust, suggesting that some of the men might have died from suffocation.¹³⁵ This intimate information, known to the families and those who lived in the area, was reported widely in the press and the ways in which people died was run by national newspapers such as *The Times*.¹³⁶ Similarly railway accidents often received 'morbid interest' from the press, and newspaper reports included 'gruesome descriptions of charred or mangled corpses.'¹³⁷ Even military deaths which occurred in the civilian sphere were subject to the same treatment as their civilian counterparts. The newspaper reports of the Quintinshill disaster provided drawn out descriptions of the deaths of victims who were trapped in the train when it set alight.¹³⁸ *The Railway Times* was so appalled at the level of detail described in the general press that they stated the following in its coverage of the disaster: 'over the horrors of the accident we prefer to draw a veil as the daily press had painted so vivid a picture of the terrible time through which the rescued and the rescuers passed that its reproduction is most distasteful.'¹³⁹

Lists of the dead were again used during the First World War. Lists of Officer casualties were pored over by families to see who had been injured, and to check that the names of their relatives and friends were absent. After the Quintinshill disaster, where the overwhelming majority of the dead were soldiers, many were declared 'missing' as the bodies had been burned. As John Thomas has highlighted, 'The term 'missing' was hard to accept in the context of an accident on Scottish soil.'¹⁴⁰ In her wartime diary, Vera Brittain simply expressed her distress by writing; 'I may well dread to open *The Times*'.¹⁴¹ She often noted the shock of finding an acquaintance or friend on the casualty lists and her diary is full of small comments about the apprehension with which the lists came to be observed. Yet, these were sanitised lists: the ways in which the deaths occurred were omitted. In-depth description of the injuries sustained was also omitted when the same local newspaper was discussing a char-a-banc crash in which several women died; in their reportage the victims were simply 'lifeless'.¹⁴² The different treatment given to different groups, men who died in the workplace as opposed to women on a day trip, suggests a gendered reading of disaster reports.

Although lists of the dead in wartime did not have an accompanying list of the exact cause of death, civilians were well aware of the realities of frontline fighting. As Adrian

¹³⁵ *Consett Chronicle*, 5 March 1909, p. 6.

¹³⁶ *The Times*, 18 February 1909, p. 12.

¹³⁷ L.T.C. Holt, *Red for Danger* (London, 1967), p. 15.

¹³⁸ *The Carlisle Journal*, 25 May 1915, p.4; *Dumfries and Galloway Standard & Advertiser* 26 May 1915, p. 6.

¹³⁹ *The Railway Gazette*, 28 May 1915, p. 544.

¹⁴⁰ John Thomas, *Gretna: Britain's Worst Railway Disaster (1915)* (Newton Abbot, 1969), p. 66.

¹⁴¹ Vera Brittain, *Chronicle of Youth* (London, 1981), p. 213.

¹⁴² *The Consett Guardian*, 'Memento of the Motor Char-a-Banc Calamity', (Consett, Robt. Jackson & Co., 1911), p. 2.

Gregory notes, nobody was wholly convinced by the portrait painted in the media, and often media reports were ‘far more honest about front-line conditions than legend suggests.’¹⁴³ The sanitisation of the letters to families, about the ‘quick’ and ‘painless’ ways in which men died has been discussed by both Jessica Meyer and Michael Roper in their respective works about men and emotion in the First World War.¹⁴⁴ Despite this focus on swift death within letters to the bereaved, it is clear that families would have been well aware of the horrific nature of the fighting fronts. Letters home, although often censored, nonetheless told of danger at the frontline, fear the soldiers faced, and contained general descriptions of the aftermath of battle.¹⁴⁵ Visits home allowed frank conversations to be had with varying family members, which had the potential to reveal the true face of war. Civilians would have also been conscious of the war-wounded, especially if they lived in a town or city attached to a war hospital.¹⁴⁶ While perhaps the heroic nature of death was focused on in the newspapers, families were highly aware of the rhetorical language used, and that death at the frontline was not as simple as a single bullet, although many will have clung onto letters explaining the instantaneous death of a loved one in the hopes that, in their case, it was true.

The necessity of the discourse surrounding the ideal of a quick and painless death is demonstrated by Bill Williamson, who produced a biography of his mining family in Northumberland in the early twentieth century. He discusses his aunt receiving a telegram which informed the family of the death of one of their number on the same day that a letter saying he was in good health arrived. His aunt recalled that Williamson’s grandmother:

“Sat rocking her chair with grief and ringing her hands.” They heard later that he was not killed outright. Badly wounded, he was moved on to a stretcher to the sanctuary of the church near the front. Moments later the church was obliterated by heavy artillery fire. “This news”, said my uncle Jim, “nearly killed Maggie.”¹⁴⁷

The grief felt at the reception of the telegram and letter here merged with the knowledge that the traditional transcript of a swift and painless death was not quite kept to; the family was about to emotionally process his death, but to know that it was drawn out proved insurmountable to Williamson’s aunt. The families of the deceased needed to experience a type of cognitive dissonance between the fighting they had heard described and the way in

¹⁴³ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 133.

¹⁴⁴ See Roper, *The Secret Battle*, p. 205; 213–214; Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 79; also see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 35.

¹⁴⁵ Meyer, *Men of War*, pp. 16–20.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

¹⁴⁷ Bill Williamson, *Class, Culture and Community: A Biographical Study of Social Change in Mining* (London, 1982), p. 152.

which their loved one died.¹⁴⁸ The families of those killed in a mining disaster did not quite have the same opportunity. Despite bodies being brought back covered, and families being unable, in some cases, to view them, with the press describing the horrific ways in which their loved ones died, families of the dead were not allowed the same space to create this mental distance that families of the war dead sometimes were. They were not allowed to imagine their loved one having died quickly and painlessly as the physical state of the bodies allowed their gruesome deaths to be imagined in ways that a single bullet to the temple (a prevalent image during the First World War), did not.¹⁴⁹ Although it will have been known that this was not necessarily the case, the images provided in the popular press allowed families the ability to latch onto this idea, although whether they did so or not is unclear. Certainly, the possibility of the ‘quick’ and heroic death offered a hope that was extinguished when explicit descriptions of the means of death were published.

While bereaved families were attempting to negotiate the return and burial of their dead, and colliery owners were providing meals and wreaths, what is striking is the sheer amount of ephemeral material already in circulation. Postcards depicting miners and soldiers, newspaper articles describing the dead, pamphlets sent by the IWGC, and photographs of funerals have all featured among the discussion thus far. Physical mementos of the disaster site could also be taken by keen observers. For example, a five year old boy was allowed out from his boarding school to go and see the aftermath of the Bullhouse Bridge disaster in 1884, and his son later explained that ‘father told of how rows of bodies were laid out under the bridge. He also told of taking a piece of a carriage door!’¹⁵⁰ The boy kept the piece of carriage door and eventually made a cutlery box and some wall plaques for his new wife which were kept in the family until the late 1970s. Items of the wreckage, taken from the site of the disaster, in turn became family mementos and pieces of private family tragedy could be turned into larger commemorative items. Family memorialisation began amidst a vast swathe of ephemeral material already being produced in response to war and disaster.

Families who lost loved ones during war and disaster faced different immediate issues. For the families of disaster victims, the press, aid workers, and concerned onlookers all flooded to the site of the tragedy, with the bulk of people peaking during the funerals of the victims. For those who lost someone in war, they did not have the immediate problem of dealing with media intrusion, but nonetheless the mass of reporting in newspapers was still focusing on the conflict and its existence was difficult to ignore. Nonetheless, families still

¹⁴⁸ Jay Winter briefly discusses this detachment from the horrors of war in relation to their own war dead in *Sites of Memory*, pp. 35–36.

¹⁴⁹ Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, p. 212.

¹⁵⁰ NRM, Object Files, 1976-7973.

found themselves in similar positions: where there was a body it was nearly always buried on behalf of the family, by an official organisation, be it the state or a colliery company. While there was some limited choice in the ways in which it was presented, as seen in the testimony of Mrs Hill and the inscriptions on the IWGC headstones, this was, in many ways, more of an illusion than a free choice. The majority of families were seemingly ambivalent towards this; however, as in the case of the petition against the IWGC, some families were not so eager for memorial rites to be taken over by an external party. Strange notes the cathartic function of the funeral for many working class people up until 1914; such ceremonies being imbued with opportunities to personalise the memory of the deceased.¹⁵¹ The removal of such autonomy by the colliery companies after mining disasters, civic authorities in the case of wartime explosions, or the IWGC in the aftermath of the First World War, meant that families had to find alternate ways of mourning. At-home memorialisation became increasingly important in light of this, and it is to these intimate forms of domestic memorialisation that we now turn.

¹⁵¹ Julie-Marie Strange, “‘She cried very little’: death, grief and mourning in working-class culture, c.1880–1914’, *Social History* 27:2 (2002), p. 145.

Chapter 3

Intimate Grief

In a small terraced house in the village of Washington, Tyne and Wear, there is a Next of Kin Memorial Plaque displayed on a wall in an open plan living-dining room. The plaque, given to the family in the wake of the First World War, once rested on the wall above the bureau in the living room until it was relocated into the dining area following the death of the plaque's original caretaker. Above the fireplace, in a living room a couple of miles away, is a large family photograph containing the image of James Wake, who died in the 1908 Washington Glebe colliery explosion. These types of small, personal, in-home memorials, which in some cases still reside in family homes today, formed the core of family memorialisation during the first four decades of the twentieth century. They offered the family agency over the ways in which their loved ones were memorialised, and this was so effective that some of these memorial objects still exist within family homes and their inherited owners can discuss their provenance with ease. Other such family objects, that have escaped home clearances and various moves, languish in attics or appear in museum collections. These once common reminders of the dead were a way for people to remember their loved ones in an intimate setting. This was especially important given the days of mass remembrance which, although they intersected with family memorial practices, did not provide a full release for familial grief. The two main ways in which families mourned within the home were either through an intimate act, of reading letters of a loved one at a certain time or date, or through an intimate display of memorial items within a house. These ways of memorialising the dead were not mutually exclusive and often occurred contemporaneously. This chapter explores the meanings of framing and displaying items in the semi-performative sphere of the home. It first explores the intimate, largely intangible, acts which people used to memorialise the dead before moving on to explore how small, physical, reminders of the dead were utilised in the home. The return of personal belongings of the dead will be explored in relation to intimate mourning rituals as well as the ways in which items were displayed within the home. Finally, a case study is used to draw together many of the themes discussed in the chapter and explore the liminal space which the fiancée of the deceased occupied within familial mourning practices.

For all that this chapter focuses on objects, much could be said about the silences surrounding these memorial acts. Intangible ways of mourning and the physical ways in which they sometimes manifested were highly personal. If we follow Jay Winter's definition of 'communicative silence', a counterpoint to Jan and Aleida Assmann's 'communicative

memory', that constitutes a 'category of performative nonspeech acts', we can see that intimate familial acts, even those not involving discussion of the person, could be used as a way of mourning the dead within the household.¹ Objects, too, could be joined to this silent performative realm and there were both direct and indirect ways in which people displayed the objects of the dead within their homes. Whether there was a conversation about the items depend upon the individual family, and while some will have discussed the items and the person associated with them regularly it is highly likely that others used them in silent memory practices.

Hardest to gain access to are the intangible acts family members used to commemorate the dead. These could take a myriad of forms from simply sitting and thinking about the deceased to inviting others into the home to talk about their lives. Glimpses of grief can be seen in people's interactions with others, such as the war widow who mentioned to her friend that 'it was always the worst coming home to nothing'.² Another can be seen in an interview with Rachel Buchanan, the last surviving victim of the Quintinshill railway disaster in 1915, who was only three years old when the accident occurred, but woke up on the 22 May, the date of the accident, at the time of the crash, every year.³ These feelings of loss, discussed and enacted in personal and private spaces are challenging to reconstruct, but nonetheless formed a part of many people's memorial practices.

These intangible acts tend to be recorded in cases of what was deemed by onlookers to be overtly public grief, especially in reference to the First World War. Käthe Kollwitz, one of the most discussed examples of this, is well known both because of the intensity and the longevity of her grief, but also because of the public expression of this in the form of her artwork. Given the inherently private nature of grief and individual feelings of loss, it is not unreasonable to assume that every bereaved person utilised a series of intangible memorial acts which have not all been captured for posterity: Kollwitz's responses were rare in that they were well recorded, yet her memorial actions would have been familiar to many. The personal reaction of Käthe Kollwitz to the death of her son Peter in 1914 has been well documented by Winter. Kollwitz spoke to her son, preserved his bedroom, and invited friends to come and share the commemorative space she had created within her home.⁴ Regina Schulte, who has also studied Kollwitz's mourning, notes that Kollwitz began to refer to 'Peter's silent white

¹ Jay Winter, *War Beyond Words* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 202.

² C.S. Peel, *How we Lived then 1914–1918: A sketch of social and domestic life in England during the war* (London, 1929), p. 50.

³ Quoted in Jack Richards & Adrian Searle, *The Quintinshill Conspiracy*, (Barnsley, 2013), p. 239.

⁴ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 110; Jay Winter, 'Forms of kinship and remembrance in the aftermath of the Great War', in Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 57.

room' in her diary; a place where she adorned the bed with flowers and burned candles.⁵ At Christmas a tree was placed in the room with a candle for each year of his life. Yet, with these intimate acts, Schulte argues that Kollwitz distanced herself from her other son, Hans, who had also fought but had survived the war. In claiming Peter's memory as something that only she could access she barred both her husband and her surviving son from mourning as a family group: she shared a maternal bond with her dead son that elevated her grieving over theirs.⁶ Kollwitz's grief may have been extreme. However, other families most likely shared in some of her commemorative efforts: letters would have been read aloud, friends and family discussed the deceased, and special items of theirs would have been kept as memorial items.

The preservation of a room as sacred was not wholly uncommon. The room's preservation, and indeed original existence, depended upon the income of the family. There is presupposition that there was a room of their own to preserve, and the preservation of a room did not always match the individual ways in which individuals and families chose to mourn. Some examples of preserved rooms still exist. The first year of the centenary brought with it the story, reported upon in the press, that the parents of Hubert Rochereau, a French soldier who died in the First World War, kept his room in the village of Bélâbre as it was when he died, bricking up the entrance and entreating their friend General Eugène Bridoux to preserve the room when they bequeathed the house to him in 1935.⁷ These special rooms, preserved by the family for an extended period of time, were rare. Some would likely have preserved their son's room for some time after their death but long-term designation of the room as theirs was less common. For some, as in the case of Kollwitz, the room was clearly a comfort; presumably for others a preserved room could represent a tormenting reminder of the deceased.

Instead of a room being the focal point of mourning, some intimate mourning rituals could involve objects which were brought out as a memory prompt or to act as a focal point for a specific length of time. These objects could then be hidden once they had been touched or observed. Indicative examples of these types of ritual include photographs of the deceased which were aired only on special occasions and a protective pocket sewn for a Next of Kin Memorial Plaque [See Fig. 1].⁸ These hidden objects of grief, rarely glimpsed but highly

⁵ Regina Schulte, 'Käthe Kollwitz's Sacrifice', trans. Pamela Selwyn, *History Workshop Journal* 41 (Spring, 1996), pp. 196–197.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 209–211.

⁷ *Guardian*, 'French soldier's room unchanged 96 years after his death in the first world war', available at, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/14/french-soldier-room-unchanged-first-world-war> (accessed August 2018); 'French town tries to save first world war soldier's room for posterity', available at, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/28/french-town-belabre-first-world-war-soldier-hubert-rochereau> (accessed August 2018).

⁸ Interview with Beverley Towers, 7 March 2016.

personal, could remain undetected by others at the discretion of the owner of the item and both the highly personal items, such as a photograph, or more official types of memorialisation item families commonly owned, such as a plaque, could be treated in this way.

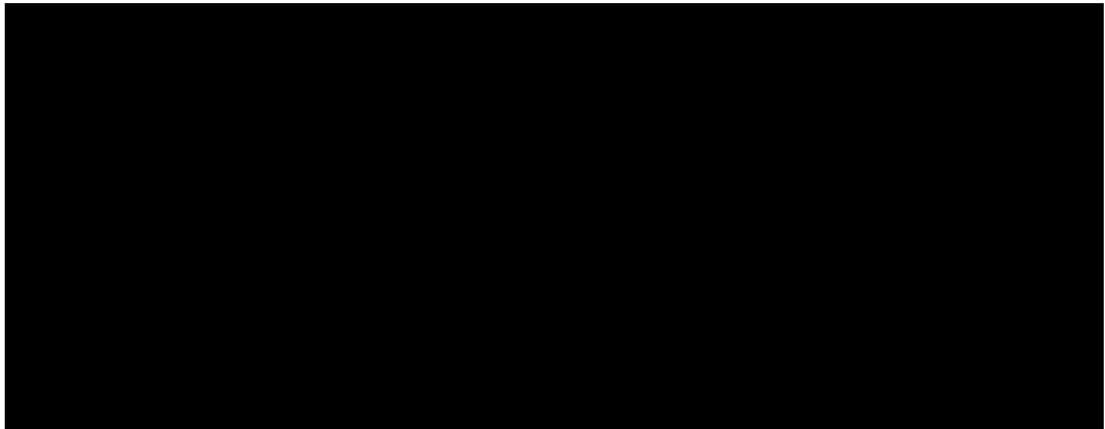


Fig. 1. Next of Kin Memorial Plaque and Pouch.⁹

Some families chose to make the intangible tangible and after the First World War some chose to memorialise their loved ones by engraving their last words to their families on their IWGC headstone. The wife of Pte G. H. Pratt, of the East Lancashire Regiment, had his last words to her, ‘God be with you till we meet again’, engraved on his IWGC headstone as a permanent reminder of both his last moments with her and of the Christian hope that they would indeed meet once more.¹⁰ In so doing, his wife linked her husband’s literal, corporeal, goodbye with a spiritual Christian farewell which spoke of reunion. These small connectors, of a highly personal meaning being broadcast by the family in an unseen way, offer a new understanding of the commemorative words chosen to be displayed in a public place. The IWGC regulated the words placed on their gravestones, meaning that only certain types of publicly acceptable phrases would be allowed; but within this remit a choice of words with a highly personal resonance could be displayed.

The previous chapter noted that objects were used to identify the dead after a disaster and in the First World War, and often these items were incorporated into wider memorial practices. The War Office, whenever possible, returned a deceased soldier’s items to the family. These items were not received without problems: the items themselves could be in a state of disintegration, might be deemed as unhygienic and inadvisable to return, were returned in an incomplete state, or could add to the grief already felt by the family. Nonetheless, the return of the belongings was often enacted and, whatever comfort it brought to the family, keeping the objects seems to have been the common response of the families. The returned

⁹ DLIC, Acc No. 2013.10.(1–2).

¹⁰ CWGC efiles, Letter from Mrs Pratt, 16 November 1924.

belongings could be in some state of disrepair. Similar to tobacco tins twisted by the heat of a colliery fire, watches could be smashed, and dog tags worn out. Most soldiers paid for their military issue cardboard dog tags to be replaced with metal ones, as they were notorious for disintegrating in the extreme living conditions, but even these modified items did not always escape unscathed. Occasionally the War Office cautioned against the return of items as they were deemed unhygienic, however, families did not always agree that the corrupt state of the belongings was a deterrent to claiming them. Pte James William Ward was identified by his dog tags and a locket which contained an image of his wife. The War Office wrote to the family in 1924 informing them of the poor state that the items were in and advising them that, although they could be returned, they were rather unsanitary and they would advise against it. The family ignored the advice and now keeps the items in a small box with other mementos of family members who suddenly died.¹¹

The return of personal effects, as well as having a positive emotional effect on the family, also had the potential to disrupt family grieving processes. Some did not receive the full personal effects of their loved one and attempted to express their feelings about this oversight to those involved. H. C. McBeath wrote to complain about the ‘few paltry things’ returned to him after the death of his son, Harry, in 1915.¹² In the letter he explained that he ‘almost felt it an insult to send such [few items] to me.’ He went on to explain that ‘amongst other things taken from his body before burial were a gold Ring, Wrist Watch, silver Cigarette Case & Field glasses besides articles of lesser value’ commenting that ‘it was not their value that concerned me so much, but I and his family would liked to have had them as a memento of one who died for his King & Country.’¹³ By framing the loss in terms of a familial instead of financial one McBeath appealed to those involved as sentimental beings; it was the loss of memories that was focused on instead of the economic one although the root cause of their loss, financial gain, was somewhat bitingly alluded to. Sometimes the return of personal belongings contained an added layer of pathos. Pte Leonardi of the Lincolnshire Regt wrote on the back of a photograph of his wife ‘If anything should happen please will the finder of these photos send them to [wife’s address] and oblige Pte E. Leonardi 10655’. The message on the back of the photograph of his daughter simply read ‘I love you Gracy Darling with all my hearts content’.¹⁴ The return of these items would have had the potential to contain a particular poignancy to his family. Given the sheer number of personal belongings returned, these types of experience, which were both tragic in different ways, were not unexpected, and

¹¹ Interview with Terry Evans, 15 March 2016.

¹² Harry Taylor, private collection, letter from H. C. McBeath to the Officer in charge of No 2 Records [1915].

¹³ Harry Taylor, private collection, letter from H. C. McBeath to the Officer in charge of No 2 Records [1915].

¹⁴ Harry Taylor, private collection, Pte E Leonardi effects.

practical, bureaucratic issues could mar the family's experience of receiving personal belongings.

Contrasting the hidden items of grief were memorial items that were framed and displayed in hallways and family rooms. Frames came at a variety of costs, and the majority of families could afford some kind of basic frame in which to display memorial material. The placement of the items within the home offers an indication of the ways in which they were meant to be interpreted by those who were allowed into the home and would view the objects. The construction of the home, both the physical construction which dictates the type of room and the amount of space, as well as the social construction of the home as a place where people live, needs to be considered in order to understand the significance of where people were placing their memorial objects and how the space was accessed by others. As the sociologist Rachel Hurdley notes 'the house, like other sites of social interaction, has front stage and back stage regions (although these are not necessarily spatially fixed), where different performances take place.'¹⁵ Sociologists Graham Allan and Graham Crow draw attention to the concept of a home as a space in which privacy can be sought but a space in which others can enter, at the discretion of the family which inhabits the property.¹⁶ Allan has explored the social boundaries which dictate the use of space within the home, suggesting that those allowed into the space differ between households and authority to invite people into the home is changeable.¹⁷ He argues that a 'special occasion' such as a funeral, changes the social norms within a home and permits people who would usually be excluded to be allowed entry into the domestic space.¹⁸

Both the people who interacted with the home, and the ways in which the homeowners treated their space, changed over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The people who could enter the home and the liminal space the parlour occupied within many houses is important. The concept of the home as a private space became common in the nineteenth century as a trickle-down effect of the middle class preoccupation with delineating private space, with the parlour acting as an interstitial space in which outsiders could glimpse a heavily ordered version of the rest of the home, although as Hurdley points out, this presupposes that one has enough room to preserve this separate space.¹⁹ The parlour was a feature of many homes in the interwar period, and it was not until after the Second World War that the parlour was eliminated from modern homes, which meant that there was

¹⁵ Rachel Hurdley, *Home, Materiality, Memory and Belonging*, (Houndmills, 2013), p. 15.

¹⁶ Graham Allan & Graham Crow, 'Introduction', in Graham Allan & Graham Crow (eds.), *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere* (Basingstoke, 1989), p. 4.

¹⁷ Graham Allan, 'Insiders and Outsiders: Boundaries around the Home', in Graham Allan & Graham Crow (eds.), *Home and Family: Creating the Domestic Sphere* (Basingstoke, 1989), p. 141.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁹ Allan, 'Insiders and Outsiders', p.149; 155; Hurdley, *Home, Materiality, Memory and Belonging*, p. 14.

a formal space in many homes which was used only on special occasions.²⁰ The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a change in the way the order and decoration of homes were considered.²¹ Anthropologists have called attention to the fact that people express themselves symbolically in the spatial arrangements and interior decoration of their houses: the gendered nature of this was constructed during the early twentieth century.²² Hurdley argues that a shift in domestic responsibility for domestic design took place between 1880 and 1930; previously, men had been the dictators of interior taste but by the end of the period women were largely responsible for their domestic aesthetic.²³ The interwar period was also key to understanding houses and living. The decades between the wars mark a time of unprecedented mass speculative building programmes, the development of suburbia, and a new professional concern with bringing modernist architecture to steer public aesthetic taste.²⁴

Not all of those affected by sudden death had the luxury of an abundance of rooms to decorate or the wealth necessary to decorate as they pleased. Typical homes for miners in the nineteenth century were reasonably crowded, and family space was often shared with others who lived in the same house. Some of the overcrowding was blamed on the false assumption that miners had too many children. However, as Benson has argued the 1911 census showed that miners had 4.23 children on average, which was not out of line with other occupational groups: while the average number of children amounted to 3.53, agricultural labourers averaged 4.51 children, and iron and steel workers 4.36.²⁵ However, the crowding of the miners' homes came not from the children, but from the common practice of taking in lodgers, which meant that it was not uncommon for families to share one or two rooms.²⁶ While it was not unusual that mining families owned their own homes, for instance in 1913 in South Wales 20 per cent of the mining community owned their own property, after the First World War home ownership became more frequent, although it was still a working class elite who were able to afford such luxury.²⁷ Homes for miners could be in a terrible condition. In Whitehaven, many houses where workers in the Wellington Pit lived were cleared during the slum demolitions of the 1930s, but the condition and size of houses varied greatly between towns and villages.²⁸ The living conditions of the miners indicate that, as with the families of those

²⁰ Judy Attfield, 'Bringing Modernity Home: Open Plan in the British Domestic Interior', in Irene Cieraad (ed.), *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* (New York, 1999), p. 77; John Benson, *The Working Class in Britain 1850–1939* (London, 2003), p. 103.

²¹ Hurdley, *Home, Materiality, Memory and Belonging*, p. 15.

²² Irene Cieraad, 'Introduction: Anthropology at Home', in Irene Cieraad (ed.), *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space* (New York, 1999), p. 2.

²³ Hurdley, *Home, Materiality, Memory and Belonging*, p. 46.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁵ John Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1989), p. 121.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

²⁷ Benson, *The Working Class in Britain 1850–1939*, pp. 74–75.

²⁸ Interview with Colin McCourt, 28 February 2018.

who died in war, there was a vast difference in the types of houses and economic wealth of the various families involved with the tragedy, which to some extent dictated the memorial forms they could afford to purchase and the space available to display these items in.

Key to home-based memorialisation was the blending of different types of memorial item. Some were highly personal, such as the loved one's belongings, whereas others, such as a state-sanctioned memorial plaque, were smaller echoes of wider remembrance initiatives. Nearly all forms of memorial included the name of the deceased. Daniel Sherman has argued that the placing of names on memorials was highly significant for the individual mourner: the inclusion of their loved one's name on a collective memorial offered a point of personal memory which could be located within a larger constructed and collective memory of war.²⁹ The ability to see the name on a larger collective memorial was, most likely, of some emotional importance to the family but did not offer the comfort of a funeral. When the bodies were absent from the at-home commemoration process, such as in the case of the First World War or a mining disaster such as the one in Gresford in 1934, where the bodies of the dead were never recovered, the inclusion of a name on multiple types of memorial, both public and private, was increasingly significant in light of the lost bodies. One Gresford widow, during an interview over seventy years after the disaster, recalled 'it was awful... you can't describe it... it was so terrible... they didn't have a chance of getting him home. It was awful, awful... his name's on the stone in the cemetery... me Mother and my little girl are there, but my husband isn't, only his name.'³⁰ She still had her husband's photograph displayed in her house. The lack of his body in the family grave, near his daughter, was still painful to his wife decades later. In lieu of a body, the poor substitute of her husband's name and his photograph seemingly took on an enhanced significance to her memory of him. The naming of the dead could be perceived as a hollow solace. Thomas Lacquer has drawn attention to the problems facing the war dead: with so many, and so many bearing the same name, how could you ensure that your family member was individually recognised?³¹ In recognition of this, and because people wanted to mourn their individual family members, increasingly personal forms of memorial material were turned to which bore the names and images of the deceased.

A key object which was often a key part of household remembrance practices was the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque. In the wake of the First World War the government produced these named, bronze, and circular memorial plaques, as well as a commemorative scroll which contained a short message with a facsimile signature of King George V [See Fig. 2]. There

²⁹ Daniel Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago, 1999), p. 69.

³⁰ Blodwen Byran, quoted in Beverley Tinson, *The Gresford Letters: Aftermath of a Disaster* (Gwespyr, 2009), p. 51.

³¹ Thomas Lacquer, *The Work of the Dead: a cultural history of mortal remains* (Princeton, 2015), p. 365.

was a competition for their design advertised through *The Times* in 1917 with Edward Carter Preston supplied the winning design, which depicted Britannia holding a trident, with dolphins representing the Navy, and the lions of the British Empire biting the German Imperial eagle. There were somewhere between 800,000 and 1,150,000 plaques produced in the aftermath of the First World War.³² They were designed to dull with age, symbolising the dulling of grief as time progressed, although many families polished them regularly and so they retained their brightness. These plaques were a state sanctioned form of personal memorial: they were produced en masse but their size, portability, and personalisation meant that they breeched the public to private memorial divide. They were intimate official memorials designed to remain in the home and with the family of the deceased.

These Next of Kin Memorial Plaques mirrored the wider official recognition for those who lost their loved ones. The construction of the Cenotaph and the internment of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey were public acknowledgements of the private grief felt and an attempt to recognise this in a public space and acknowledge national mourning. As Alex King notes, this type of public mourning was didactic in character: it emphasised pride in the loss of a loved one and attempted to cultivate positive sentiments among the bereaved.³³ This construction of purpose in sacrifice was transported into the home through the dissemination of Next of Kin Memorial Plaques. These patriotic emblems were to adorn the houses of the bereaved and offer a small consolation for their loss. Despite this attempt to provide an official, positive, memorial for families, their alternate naming of ‘dead man’s pennies’, ‘death pennies’, and ‘widow’s pennies’, hints that, although they were displayed within interwar homes, it could be with some bitterness.

Military medals and Next of Kin Memorial Plaques were the most commonly framed items in the interwar period. Every British soldier who fought in the First World War was automatically awarded the Victory medal and the Defence medal, with others awarded if they had been involved in specific campaigns or had enlisted before conscription in 1916. British medals were unusual in that they had the name and regimental number of each soldier engraved on the rim of each medal making them both easily identifiable and giving them increased value to the families because of their personalisation. Soldiers’ next of kin could apply to the War Office for these medals in the event of their untimely death and many families chose to claim their loved one’s medals in this way in the years immediately following the war. These items, the medals and the Next of Kin Memorial Plaques, were often framed and

³² Philip Dutton, ‘“The Dead Man’s Penny”: A History of the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque’, *Imperial War Museum Review* 3 (1988), p. 66.

³³ Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain* (London, 1998), p. 138.

displayed, sometimes alongside images of the deceased or postcards they had sent home, and were part of a booming memorial framing trade after the First World War.

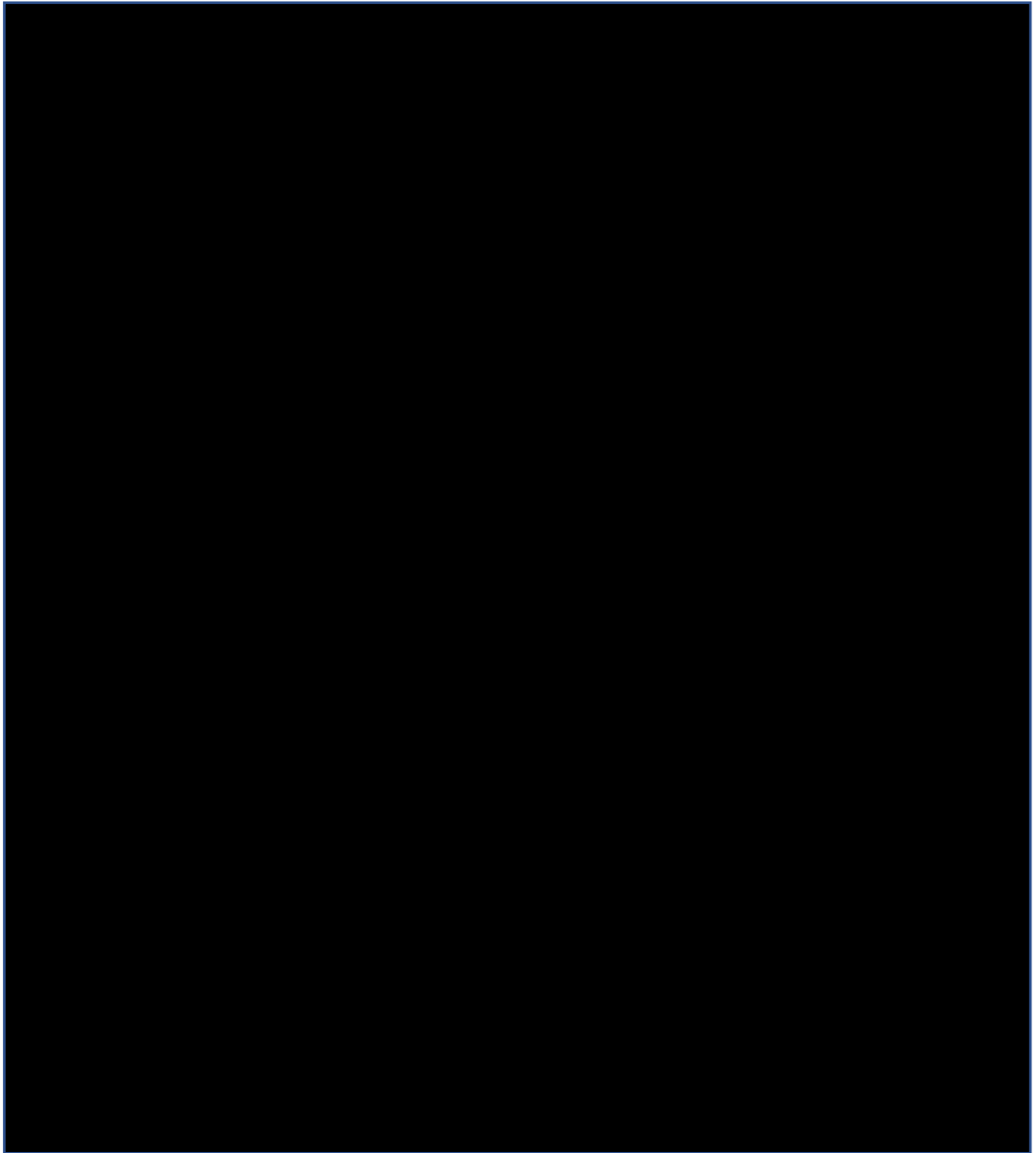


Fig. 2. King George V Scroll.³⁴

These memorial forms were not immediately available to the family. For example, the Next of Kin Memorial Plaques were nearly all disseminated to families between 1919 and 1920. Thus, the family of a man who died in 1914 could wait three years to know that there would be an official memorial created, acknowledged during the competition for the design of the memorial plaque, and five years after the death before this official memorial was received. The Next of Kin Memorial Plaques and Medals were not instantly shipped to the

³⁴ DLIC, Acc No. 07.548.

family and they could wait at least a few months before these items arrived in their household. The delay in these items arriving, and their official nature, meant that they were unlikely to be the only form of memorial used by the family. It also meant that their place in the household and the way that they were to be presented could be planned in advance. A frame could be sourced or created and ideas about an appropriate place to put them could be discussed before the item arrived within the home. Despite this time lapse they were undoubtedly highly popular memorial items in the interwar years.

A large choice of frames were available to house the medals, Next of Kin Memorial Plaques, and King George Scrolls. The final selection of frame was largely dependent upon the location of the customer and the amount of money available to spend on the frame. Handmade frames, mass manufactured offerings, and customised hangings were all reasonably common throughout the interwar years and catered to a variety of aesthetic tastes. However, this free-market approach to the manufacture of frames was not without criticism. A member of the committee for the design of Next of Kin Memorial Plaques, George Francis Hill, commented; 'As to the frames, anyone who pleases can put [them] on the market ... Of course if we had a proper 'Committee of Taste' such things could not happen.'³⁵ Some people decided to bypass the framing process and simply drill holes through the Next of Kin Memorial Plaques as an alternative to framing [See Fig. 3]. The proliferation of frame manufacture in the interwar period reflected the need for people with varying levels of income to grieve in a culturally mediated way. Families were displaying their state sanctioned mementos of death in a common way that was controlled by the manufacture of standardised frames and which allowed them to signify to any visitors to the house who entered the rooms that a family member had died in service.

³⁵ George Francis Hill, quoted in Dutton, 'The Dead Man's Penny', p. 66.



Fig. 3. Next of Kin Memorial Plaque with simple hanging mechanism.³⁶

Harry Taylor, a collector specialising in framed medal sets belonging to casualties of the First World War, has identified four particularly common types of frame; a plain rectangular oak frame [See Fig. 4], black lacquered frames, leather tooled frames for the medals of officers, and mirrors which were transformed into frames [See Fig. 5].³⁷ As with all types of ephemeral item, the collector is often the expert in the form of item that they specialise in. As such, it is necessary to engage with the knowledge offered by those who have made the collection and informal study of these items their priority. Sometimes, collectors of First World War memorabilia, in particular, fall foul to overarching cultural narratives, such as the pathos of the conflict. However, in terms of expertise regarding items they have in their care (such as manufacturing information, cost, typicality), they are invaluable sources of information and act as gatekeepers to valuable examples of items which, as was explored in Chapter 1, may not have been kept in archives or museums. Informal information about the items, such as typicality claims, can also be verified by wider archival findings. The categories of frame described by Taylor seem to fit broadly with the majority of examples kept in the archives of local regimental museums suggesting that this trend is not only present within the antiques market. All types of frame were reasonably common within homes in the 1920s and 1930s and often the quality of the frame chosen, although not always the style, reflected the socioeconomic status of the family.

³⁶ DLIC, Acc No. 2567.

³⁷ Interview with Harry Taylor, 24 July 2018.



Oak frame.³⁸

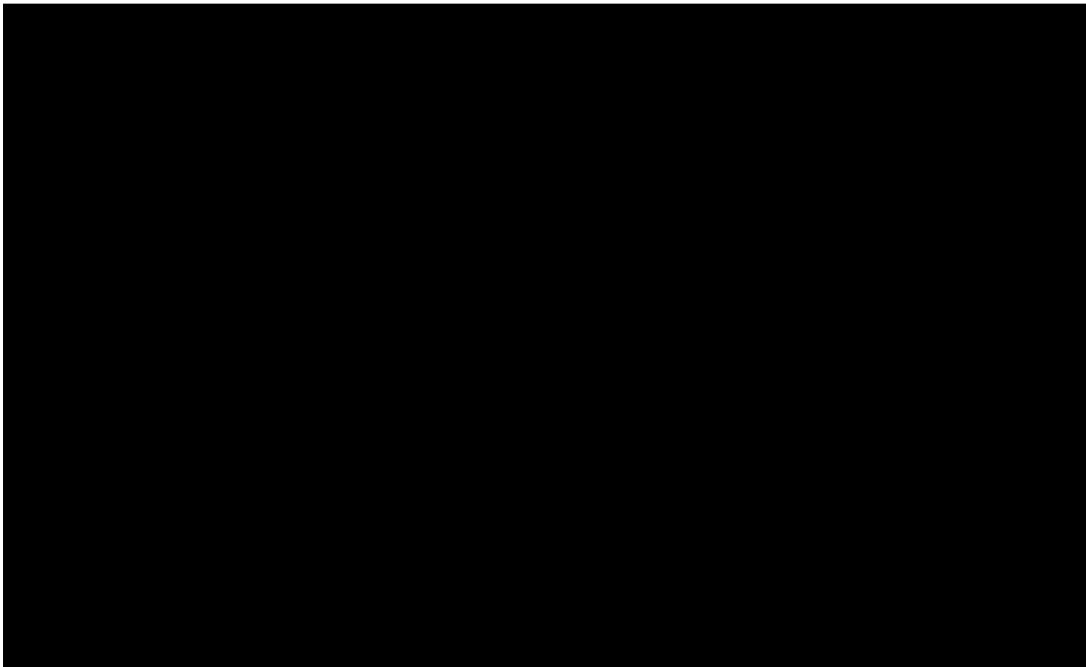


Fig. 5. Mirror made into memorial frame (with modern mount).³⁹

³⁸ Harry Taylor, private collection.

³⁹ Harry Taylor, private collection.

Handmade frames seem to have been the least popular way of framing an item, yet they were still reasonably common in the interwar period.⁴⁰ There are differing levels in the skills set shown in their making and their aesthetic, from heavily tooled examples to simple frames, differs greatly. A frame for the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque to Arthur Edward Peters, with the plaque encased in the Royal Artillery insignia, is a fairly typical example of the skill level involved in the carving of a decorative frame [See Fig. 6].⁴¹ The design is intricate, and on the whole well executed, but an amateur hand reveals itself in the bevelling around the edge (it is slightly irregular in the top left hand corner) and the Queen's crown (which is slightly asymmetrical). The style is often similar to that seen in examples of trench art, with stippling, regimental insignia, and carved patterns being popular, and it is unclear exactly who carved these frames and if they were related to, or were friends with, the man they were commemorating.

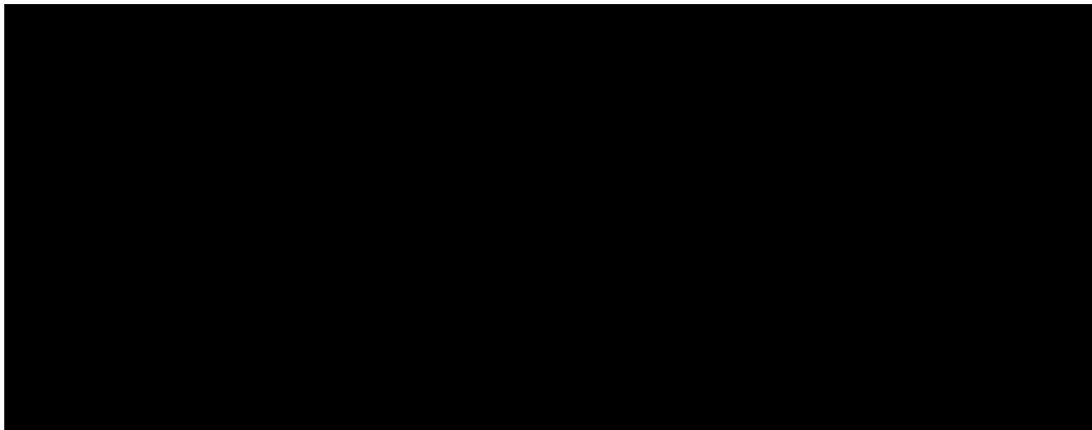


Fig. 6. Handmade frame.⁴²

On occasion, German Prisoners of War carved frames for the local populace to buy. One such example of this is the frame for a North East soldier who died in the First World War [See Fig. 7]. The frame is expertly carved but the poor quality of the wood, and its similarity to other pieces produced by Prisoners of War in Northumberland, suggest that this frame was made by Prisoners of War and sold for a small amount.⁴³ These items were handmade, by the 'enemy', and used to commemorate the British war dead. Despite the low quality of the materials used, the carvings tended to be precise, suggesting that the people who

⁴⁰ This may be skewed by perceptions of handmade frames as having a greater emotional value, leading to their retention in family archives.

⁴¹ Harry Taylor, private collection.

⁴² Harry Taylor, private collection.

⁴³ Also see examples of this from the IWM, EPH 546 and the Northumberland Fusiliers 'Wooden Carvings', available at, <https://www.northumberlandfusiliers.org.uk/about/museum/wooden-carvings/> (accessed September 2018) for items made in a similar style and out of the same type of wood by Prisoners of War.

bought them wanted a cheap but well-made frame, and who did not care that it was made by those who had fought for the Central Powers.



Fig. 7. Frame made by German Prisoner of War.⁴⁴

In contrast to these highly decorated handmade examples, commonly manufactured frames were typically plain and edged with black lacquer or oak panelling. The majority of people in the interwar period seem to have used local framers, such as Nielsen's of Hartlepool or T. Rushworth and Sons in Durham, or a larger framing company with offices in the town where they lived, such as Boots the Chemist or the Co-Operative Society. These small framing companies could also accommodate special framing requests. For example, some families decided that they did not want a rectangular frame and requested that an oval mirror frame be used instead, either sourced from the shop at hand or brought from home. These oval frames allowed the family a little more aesthetic choice over the way in which they decided to commemorate their soldier.

For those who were wealthy, or with a reasonable amount disposable income, there was decidedly more choice in the way that the memorial items were framed. However, most people contented themselves with similar frame to those sold in framing shops but made from higher quality materials. Spink and Son of London was a popular, and costly, framer used by wealthy families and produced well-crafted frames for officers' medals to reside in. Sterling silver was sometimes used in these more expensive memorial frames. In 1922, the Bloom family commissioned, among other memorial items, a silver frame for their son's medals from Mappin & Webb, a silversmith company, which cost £8 15s.⁴⁵ Occasionally, custom orders were made, such as the triptych memorial for William Hislop, which was inlaid with ivory, mother of pearl, and decorated with several different kinds of wood [See Fig. 8]. The triptych design made it easy to hide the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque when the family so desired.

⁴⁴ Harry Taylor, private collection.

⁴⁵ Harry Taylor, private collection. Receipt from Mappin & Webb, 19 July 1922.

The families of officers often created a type of memorial book-frame with the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque and medals behind glass or leather, and with a small compartment to keep the Scroll safe [See Fig. 9]. These book-like types of memorial allowed the family privacy to view the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque when they wanted to and hide the loss of the officer from the outside world, facilitated by the opening and closing of a hinged lid. Instead of displaying the plaques, they could be hidden away and other types of memorial form, such as the photograph, the portrait, or the published letters of the man in question could take the principal form of memorialisation within the home. These types of frame, where the item could be hidden or revealed, suggest that, for the families who could afford it, the option of privacy was important. Families of the deceased seemingly wanted to be able to both present their loved one's death within a public or private space, but they also wanted to be able to hide these public signifiers of loss. This choice was rather different from the ones made by poorer families, who had to remove the memorial from the wall or mount it in a different room, and allowed wealthier bereaved families much finer control over who could observe how they remembered the dead in a private space.

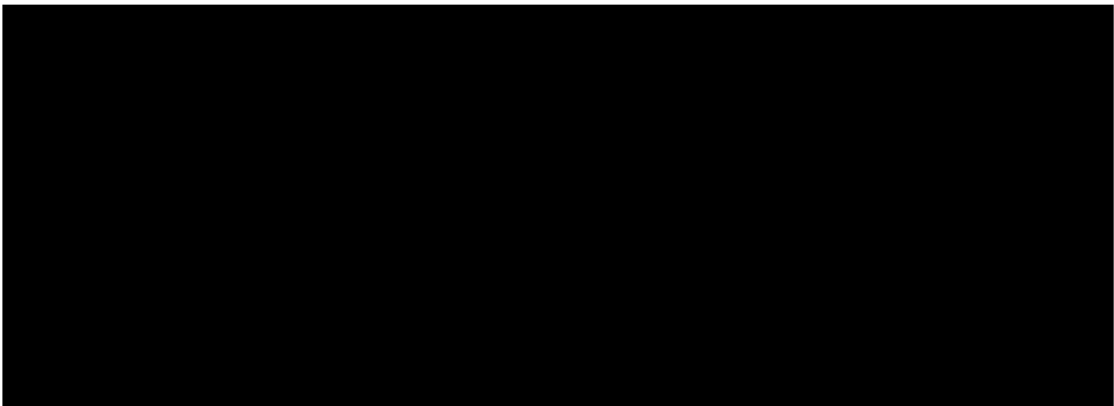


Fig. 8. Triptych Design for William Hislop.⁴⁶

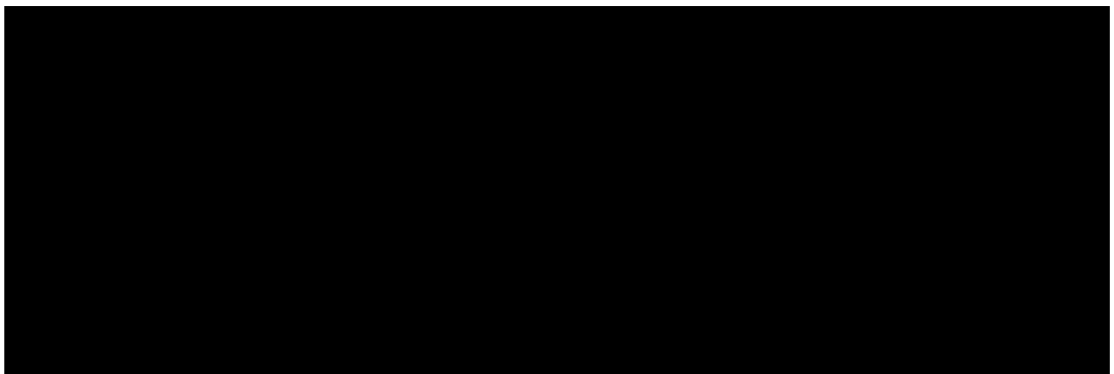


Fig.9. Memorial Book.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Harry Taylor, private collection.

⁴⁷ Harry Taylor, private collection.

Similarly, the 'King's message', a letter which accompanied the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque, with facsimile signature of King George V, was sometimes hidden within the frame. This practice varied from there being a second glass aperture on the back of the frame [See Fig. 10], to them simply being pasted on the back, possibly by the families themselves [See Fig. 11]. It is unclear why some families chose to hide the 'messages' and others display them: aesthetic preference, space, or the reassurance that the message offered, of a duty upheld, may have been the cause for their inclusion within these memorial forms.

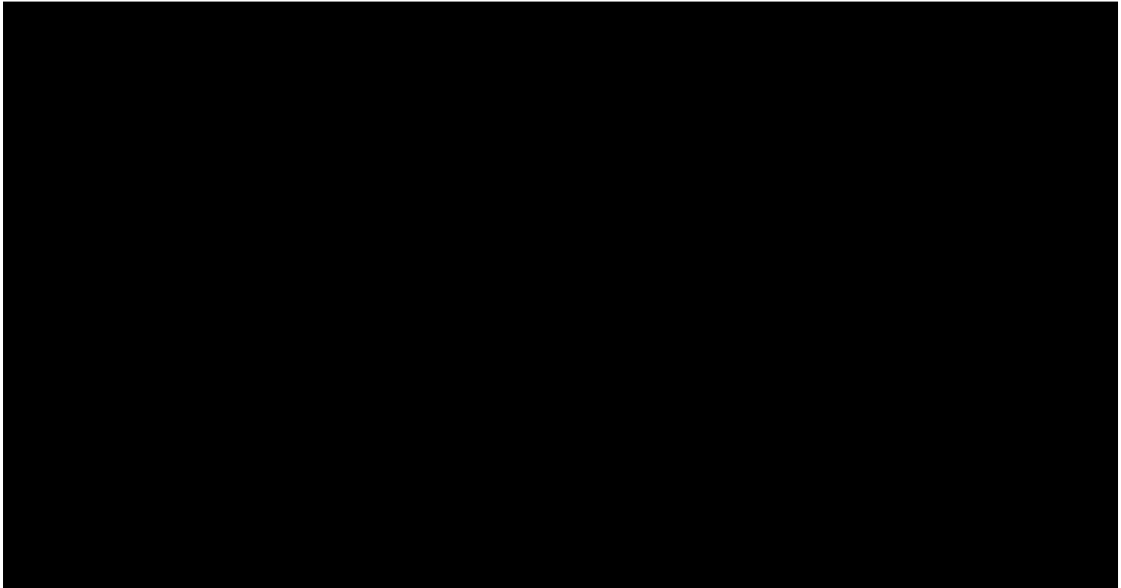


Fig. 10. Glass aperture for 'King's message'.⁴⁸

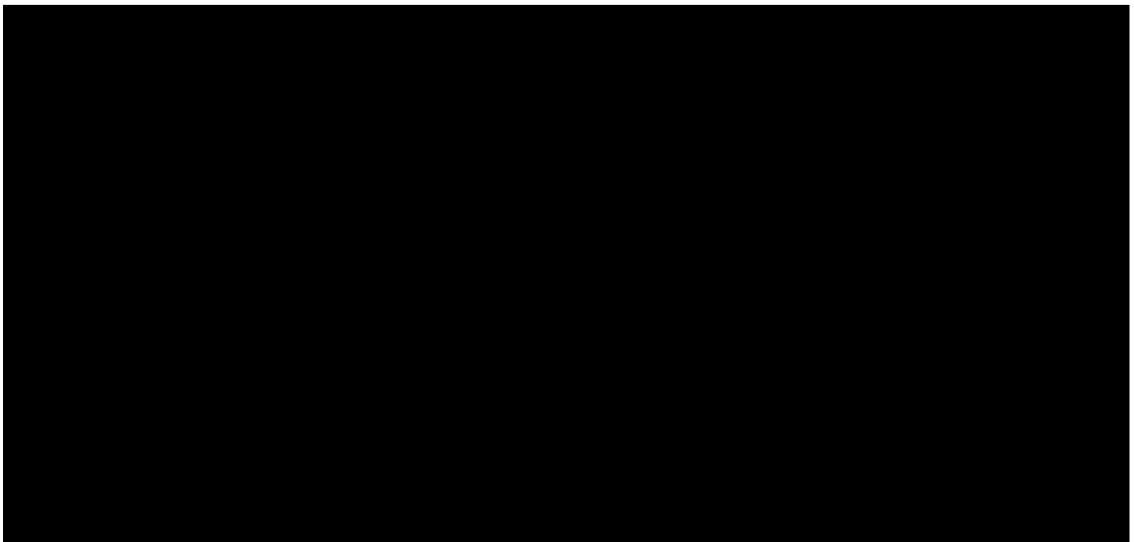


Fig. 11. 'King's message' pasted onto memorial frame.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Harry Taylor, private collection.

⁴⁹ Harry Taylor, private collection.

Families with a lower household income were not barred from purchasing elaborate frames, and inexpensive thin-wood cut outs were sometimes used to display memorial items. One such example of this type of frame belonged to the family of Pte Alexander McKay of the Scottish Rifles [See Fig. 12]. The collection of their memorial ephemera associated with McKay is vast: the family kept small souvenir items, a set of charms, McKay's eating implements stamped with his regimental number, and a small pendant with two photographs of him included [See Fig. 13].⁵⁰ One of the photographs included in the pendant (on the right hand side of the image) has been reproduced from the military photograph displayed in the ornate frame. The image in the pendant has been reproduced in half-tone print, which was only used to place images onto newspaper, making it highly probable that a family member allowed his image to appear in a newspaper, perhaps as part of a visual list of the dead, cut it out, and placed it in the pendant. This bleeding of memorial forms, and the images of the dead especially, is a recurring theme throughout this doctoral thesis. Photographs in particular occupied highly polysemous spaces. Here the photograph was used in the home, reproduced outside of the home, and then brought back in to produce a personal piece of memorial material. McKay's family requested that his IWGC headstone was inscribed: 'too dearly loved to be forgotten'.⁵¹ The family collection of memorial material indicates the varied ways in which family members commemorated the dead through small memorial objects. Larger framed items complemented smaller ones which were kept elsewhere in the home, and indeed in the case of the pendant, on the body.

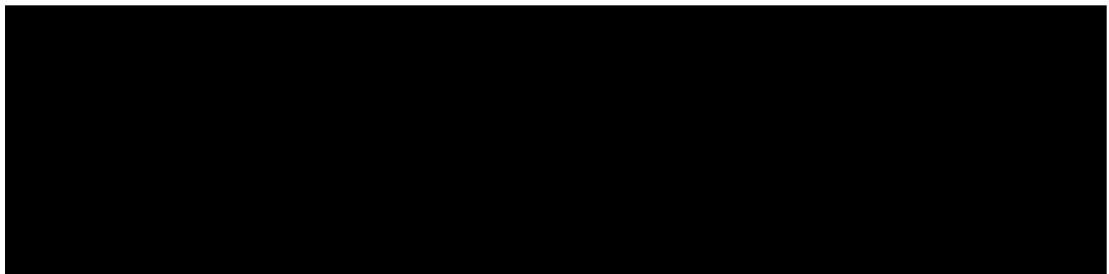


Fig. 12. Memorial frames to Pte Alexander McKay.⁵²

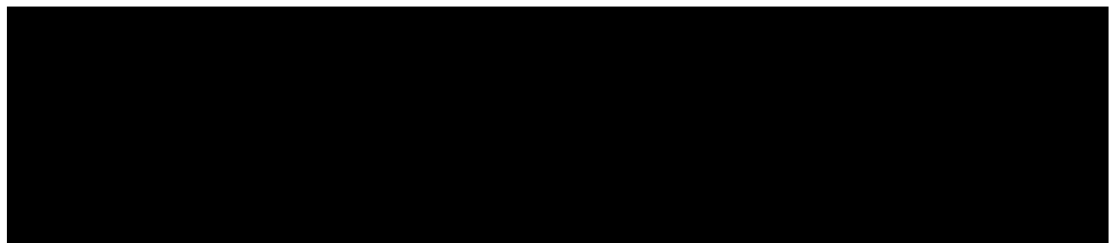


Fig. 13. Memorial locket containing images of Pte Alexander McKay.⁵³

⁵⁰ Harry Taylor, private collection.

⁵¹ CWGC website, Alexander Shearer McKay, available at, <https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/92925/mckay,-alexander-shearer/> (accessed August 2018).

⁵² Harry Taylor, private collection.

⁵³ Harry Taylor, private collection.

The McKay family, based on items of ephemera included in the collection, seem to have been Catholic, yet the only hint of this on the frames is a single wooden cross on the frame holding his Next of Kin Memorial Plaque. The secularisation of the framing of official memorial material is striking. Although different families were clearly religious, as in the case of the McKay family, this is very rarely shown in the framing of the state sanctioned memorial items. Only very rarely do religious symbols seep through into the framed memorial items produced by the family. More often, the families seem to have separated secular and religious forms of memorialisation. This trend appears to have been present more broadly. Elizabeth Roberts found, in her study of death practices in early twentieth century Lancashire, that when asked about memories of funerals, the respondents to her survey completely omit any mention of religion, despite the fact that most of the respondents identified as Christian.⁵⁴ She explains this by arguing that ‘funeral rites seemed to owe more to cultural traditions and social needs than religious beliefs.’⁵⁵ Alex King also found that religious meanings were not readily ascribed to war memorials, despite the religious symbolism carved into some of these monuments, and that clergy treated memorialisation as a civic matter.⁵⁶ The parents of Harry Bloom, in addition to purchasing a silver frame for their son’s memorial material, commissioned a stained glass window for their local synagogue.⁵⁷ The officially sanctioned memorial items were areligious, and this seems to have bled into other forms of family memorialisation: personal memorials in places of worship were instead used to fulfil a spiritual need for families who could afford to do so.

Some families incorporated the medals of members of the family who had died in earlier wars. One such family incorporated sets of medals where father and son both perished: the former in the Second Anglo-Boer War and the latter in the First World War [See Fig. 14]. The collapsing of military deaths into each other was not mirrored by families collapsing military and disaster deaths into framed items in the same way. For example, the Seed family memorialised their mining and military deaths in different ways. Ernest Seed was a private in the 7th Border Regiment and was killed attempting to rescue a Sergeant who had become trapped in barbed wire.⁵⁸ Seed’s uncle, an overman at Seaham Colliery in the North East of England, paid for the elaborate frame his Next of Kin Memorial Plaque and a personalised death notice were displayed in [See Fig. 15]. The frame, wood with bronze painted plaster of

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Roberts, ‘The Lancashire Way of Death’, in Ralph Houlbrooke (ed.), *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement* (London, 1989), p. 201.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁵⁶ King, *Memorials of the Great War*, p. 20.

⁵⁷ Harry Taylor private collection; Steve Erskine, ‘The Green Howards: “A Regiment of Many Faiths”’, *The Green Howard* (Autumn, 2017), pp. 13–14.

⁵⁸ Peter Welsh, Washington U3A, research into the Seed family.

Paris, hung in Ernest's mother's hallway until her death, when it was transferred to the hallway of Ernest's brother, before coming to its current resting place in the hallway of his great nephew.⁵⁹ Another great uncle, crushed to death in an accident in the Wellington Pit, was not afforded the same memorial luxury, although there are still family stories about his death, indicating that his demise was regularly discussed. There are a myriad of potential reasons for this. Ernest may have been a favourite nephew; the family did not receive a similar memorial item for the man crushed in the pit; had nothing of his to frame; framed something which was subsequently passed down through a different branch of the family; or a commemorative item was accidentally lost and is therefore unknown to the grand-nephew who now owns Ernest's framed plaque. The uncle who funded the memorial may have wanted to show his support for the war dead, or was in a better financial position after the First World War than previously. As a general trend framed items seem to be far more prevalent after the First World War than after disasters. Official memorial items were not given to bereaved families after disaster in the same way and personal memorials had to be created instead, and yet, for all that the memorial items were different, the stories of the two men who suddenly died were discussed in the same way by the family and both have been remembered. Both the tangible mementos and the intangible actions which led to strong memory traces being created could carry the memory of the individual forward through time by the family.

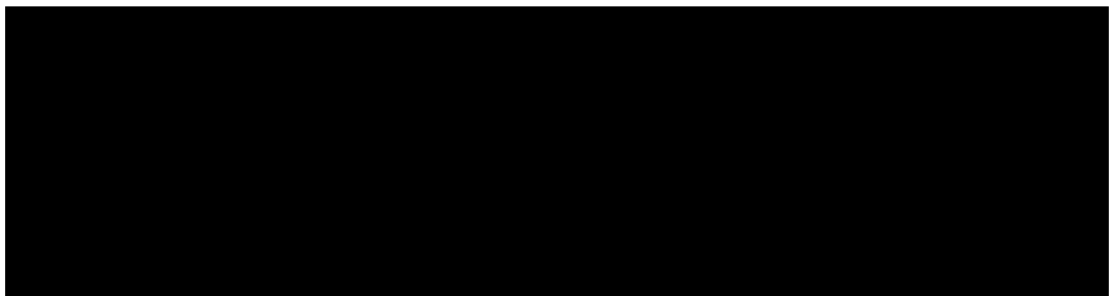


Fig. 14. Medals to father and son who perished in the Second Anglo-Boer War and First World War respectively.⁶⁰

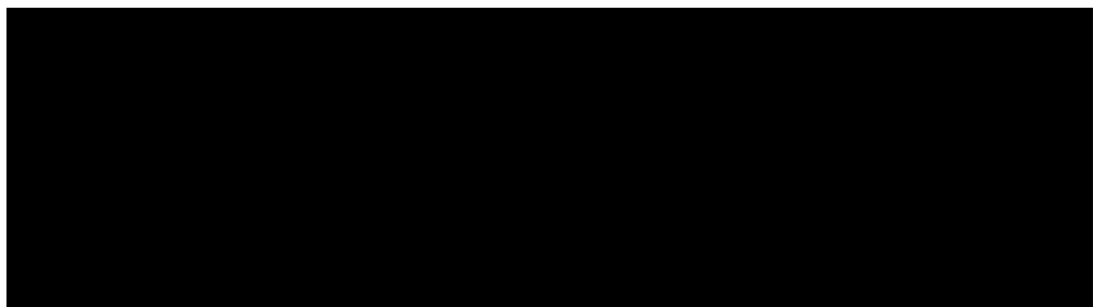


Fig. 15. Memorial Plaque for Ernest Seed.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Interview with Ernest Seed, 27 April 2016.

⁶⁰ Harry Taylor, private collection.

⁶¹ Thanks to Ernest Seed, for allowing me to use this image.

For those who did not receive an official memorial item, personal belongings and photographs formed the basis for memorialisation practices. As Sontag noted, photographs are both a reminder of death and an invitation to sentimentality.⁶² Roland Barthes commented on the painful nature of examining photographs of a loved one who has passed away. Writing about sorting through photographs of his deceased mother he noted: ‘it was not she, yet it was no one else. I would have recognised her among thousands of other women, yet I did not “find” her.’⁶³ Fiona Parrott, an anthropologist who has worked on the modern day role of the display of photographs in response to a bereavement, stresses their social and domestic role and notes that, for many, using photographs to remember the dead ‘involved embodied memories of domestic spaces and narratives that could not be read from the content of the picture.’⁶⁴ Catherine Moriarty has also drawn attention to the importance of portrait photographs in the construction of memorialisation after the First World War. She argues that portrait photographs were seen as highly important by families who used them as points of mourning in the aftermath of the war.⁶⁵ This was also true of other conflicts, and letters sent by men in the Spanish Civil War asked their wives for photographs of their families, and sent images in return, which became points of memory if the man did not survive the fighting.⁶⁶ Images of the dead had the power to console, to wound, and to shape the memoryscapes of the family. Regardless of the pain that may have been caused by viewing an image, photographs of the dead were crucial to family mourning practices in the early twentieth century.

After mining disasters, photographs of the deceased were framed and displayed in the household, and pre-existing framed photographs took on a new and special meaning for the family, becoming permanent reminders of the dead. Part of the appeal of the photograph lay in the fact that they were already present within the household, and so were instantly accessible as a point of mourning. In 1997, Beverley Tinson interviewed Blodwen Bryan, the ninety-six year old widow of a miner who died in the Gresford Disaster, and provided a typescript of their conversations over the course of a few weeks. Tinson noted that Bryan called her attention to a particular portrait: ‘There’s a good likeness of my husband in a photograph on the wall in the other room... a very good picture of him. Many a one would’ve taken it down

⁶² Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London, 2008), p. 71.

⁶³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London, 2000), p. 66.

⁶⁴ Fiona R. Parrott, ‘Bringing Home the Dead: Photographs, Family Imaginaries and Moral Remains’, in Mikkel Bille, Frida Hastrup, & Tim Flohr (eds.), *An Anthropology of Absence: Materialisations of Transcendence and Loss* (London, 2010), p. 135.

⁶⁵ Catherine Moriarty, ‘“Though in a Picture Only”: Photographs and Commemoration’, in Gail Braybon (ed.), *Evidence, History and the Great War* (New York, 2008), p. 36.

⁶⁶ Letter from Frank Owen to his wife, printed in Hywel Frances, *Miners against Fascism: Wales and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2012), p. 277.

and put it away somewhere.’⁶⁷ Her husband’s photograph, in a downstairs room of the house, was on her wall for over sixty years as an *aide-mémoire* of her deceased husband. Her comment about its continued existence upon her wall is somewhat telling; Bryan was calling attention to her long-standing commitment to her husband (she never remarried) and, through it, the presence in the household his memory had maintained.

The longevity of photographic mementos, such as the one that Bryan showed her interviewer, is unusual. Families have not always kept the items, or kept them but did not know much about their meaning until the original owner chose to disclose it. The current owner of a large aquatinted portrait photograph of a soldier, who is the grandson of the original owner, only became aware of its existence after watching the television series *The Great War* with his grandmother in 1964. This prompted his grandmother to begin talking about her experiences of the First World War, and to discuss her first husband, killed in the war, who had never been mentioned while her second husband was alive. Due to the death of her second husband, a year or so before the television series was aired, she was free to begin to discuss her first. This, coupled with the memory trigger of the show, meant that the grandmother could talk to her grandson about her loss, and pass down a portrait photograph of her first husband which had been absent from the household out of respect for the second.⁶⁸

Similar to the case of Bryan and her long-standing reminder of her husband, the family of Charles Todd has kept his Next of Kin Memorial Plaque on the wall of their home for nearly one hundred years. Charles’s sister, Emily, was fifteen years old when he died and kept his plaque above her writing bureau, in the living room, as well as two of photographs of him; one in the bureau and one in her wallet. She also named her first child after him.⁶⁹ According to her granddaughter-in-law, Charles Todd was ‘never far out of her mind.’ Upon her death the family kept the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque displayed, and framed the photograph previously kept in the bureau to accompany it. The family of Charles Todd is currently a military one, and the memorial wall contains the photographs of several soldiers past and present; but the respect that the items were treated with after their original owner’s death is touching. The memorial item’s position in the house is also telling. It is a small house and the living room is the main room downstairs, the only other rooms being a kitchen and a hallway. The positioning of the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque over the desk meant that Emily could see the photograph of Charles every time she sat down to pen her correspondence. The photograph of him in her wallet came as a surprise when she died: her grandson, who now owns the house,

⁶⁷ Beverley Tinson, *The Gresford Letters: Aftermath of a Disaster* (Gwespyr, 2009) p. 52.

⁶⁸ Interview with Stephen Brown, 29 February 2016.

⁶⁹ Interview with Beverley Towers, 7 March 2016.

did not know that she had kept the image there and it seemed to come as a small shock to the family to realise how much she had valued Charles's memory.

Popular places to display these framed items seem to have been in downstairs rooms and hallways.⁷⁰ Due to the oral testimonies used in this thesis being by second and third generation family members, it is difficult to gauge how many people placed framed memorial items of the deceased in their bedrooms: they may not remember these private rooms, or have been allowed in them when they were children. Only one instance of this has been uncovered during the course of this research. A woman whose husband won a Military Cross, and died in 1929 as a result of the effects of gas, kept his framed citation in her bedroom until at least 1974 when she moved into a nursing home, when the whereabouts of the citation was lost.⁷¹ This is not to say that memorial items in private rooms were uncommon, but indicates that both the intimate nature of the bedroom and the regulation of people who entered and later recorded this space within the home mean that this is a particularly challenging space to uncover information about. The instance of the framed citation suggests that remembrances of the dead, and indeed militaristic remembrances of the dead, could be kept in intimate settings such as the bedroom. Yet, this is also perhaps the limit of family memory: these areas were rarely accessed and the most private places in the home are not often seen in recollections. The truly private areas within the home, to a large extent, remain private.

Another space within the home utilised for the display of memorial items was the mantelpiece. Hurdley argues that the mantelpiece can be viewed as a 'domestic museum, gallery or miniature monument, relating to national or collective, performative memory practices including memories of war and trauma'.⁷² This space was one where everyday family objects jostled for the superiority with family heirlooms. The curatorship of the space by the occupants of the house was, as with the rest of the décor, sometimes more carefully planned than others. Different memorial items resided on mantelpieces: families tended to place Next of Kin Memorial Plaques on the walls of their homes instead of upon mantelpieces yet photographs were more transmutable objects and could be positioned on the wall, mantelpiece, or hidden from public view.

A directive by Mass-Observation in June 1937 sheds some light onto how people curated their mantelpiece space. There are some well-documented methodological issues with

⁷⁰ Lisa Maynard discussed similar patterns in her conference paper "I pass them when I walk in the house and I pass them when I walk out of the house": fraternal curations of wartime loss', *The Senses and Spaces of Death, Dying and Remembering*, Leeds, 28 March 2018. Also see her recently completed doctoral thesis, 'Brotherly love in the Great War', Unpublished PhD thesis, Birkbeck, University of London, 2018.

⁷¹ DLIC, Museum Donor Files, Letter to the DLI, May 1987. Acc No. 4090.

⁷² Hurdley, *Home, Materiality, Memory and Belonging*, p. 11.

using Mass-Observation; the volunteers tended to be lower-middle class and were a self-selecting portion of the populace, which skews their position as representative of the population as a whole.⁷³ Nonetheless, the mantelpiece directive is a key source in understanding how some people presented their domestic space in the 1930s. The directive asked all new observers to document ‘in order from left to right, all the objects on your mantelpiece, mentioning what is in the middle.’⁷⁴ In addition, they were asked to comment on themselves, and provide details of their age, gender, and perceived social status. If possible, volunteers were to send a photograph of the mantelpiece they were describing, although only one person sent in a photographic record of the mantelpieces described. The Mass Observation Archive holds ninety-one responses to the June mantelpiece directive from day survey volunteers along with approximately thirty more respondents who did not submit day surveys.

There are reminders of the war throughout the Mass-Observation mantelpiece directive; in ash trays from Ypres, boxes of old regimental badges, and trench art.⁷⁵ First World War mementos were present in many households in the interwar period but were seemingly not considered ubiquitous by the volunteers, necessitating explanations such as; ‘one lifts [the candlestick] with a shock, discovering it to be very light in weight as it is made in the form of a shell.’⁷⁶ Ten people mentioned items which could definitely be linked to the First World War, although it is likely there were more that originated from the conflict but could not be identified as such by the description offered. These First World War items constitute about 8 per cent of the total number of respondents. Approximately 7 per cent of those who responded to the day survey also mentioned that an image of a deceased family member or friend was displayed on the mantelpiece, of which three of these are linked to deaths in the First World War.

In addition to these general mementos of the war, small memorials to those who died in the conflict were displayed on mantelpieces. Photographs of the deceased were the only memorial items mentioned in the directives although this is likely due to their commonplace position on the mantelpiece. The mantelpiece directive indicates that photographs of non-military dead were also present within households. One volunteer mentioned a photograph of a deceased husband, and another of a child who had died twenty years previously.⁷⁷ However, the photographs of those who died in war were notable in that they were visually associated with the First World War. Soldiers wore uniforms and frames were marked as special with the

⁷³ Penny Summerfield, ‘Mass-Observation: Social Research or Social Movement?’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 20:3 (1985), pp. 441–442.

⁷⁴ MO, ‘Mass-Observation Directive to New Observers’ [June, 1937], p. 1.

⁷⁵ MO, SXMOA1/3/7/3 Misc Directives, No Name; Folder 2/6; Schoolboy Directives.

⁷⁶ MO, SXMOA1/3/7/3 Folder 2/6.

⁷⁷ MO, SXMOA1/3/7/3 Miscellaneous Male Directives.

decoration of poppies and it is possible that there were non-military remembrances of the dead, and photographs in particular, which were not detected by the volunteers. One volunteer wrote about the sitting room of an unmarried woman who was approximately fifty years of age. On her mantelpiece was ‘a photograph of a soldier in uniform (probably brother killed in war) [sic]’.⁷⁸ Those who owned memorial items did not necessarily have to be related to those who had passed away; in one person’s home the mantelpiece in her drawing room featured a ‘photo of son of a friend, who was killed at 18 in the war, in gold frame’.⁷⁹ Friends as well as family mourned the loss of a loved one, and these networks of individuals memorialised the dead in similar ways to the family, in this case, through the display of photographs of the deceased.

The longevity of some of these memorial items, from the frames which have hung in family homes, to photographs of the dead which were displayed on the mantelpiece until at least the late 1930s, indicates the everyday presence the memory of the dead could have within the home. These objects were not simply items to hang for a short period and remove as the sudden shock of immediate grief dulled, but formed long-term reminders of the dead. Commenting on the role of photographs currently, Parrott notes that they allow family members to continue in their social role with the deceased, such as a mother who continues to ‘look after’ her daughter through the display and care of a photograph bearing her image.⁸⁰ The dead were important to families and individuals in life and a reminder of them was preferable to their erasure from the household. These physical mementos were treasured and displayed in family rooms for both members of the household to see and for outsiders to observe when they were invited into the home. This quasi-public form of memorial display allowed invited outsiders to observe the curated memorial space of the family and allowed visitors to participate by remembering the dead in an intangible way, by discussing them or offering anecdotes about their memory.

As these items adopted a quasi-social role within the home, so too were they subject to outside influences, and some Mass-Observation volunteers recorded items which fused public and private remembrances. One female respondent reported that in the house of ‘middle class people, old, well off’ she found a silver frame with a photograph of a soldier ‘with a poppy fastened to it’ and a ‘small wooden cross with poppy fastened to it’ next to a newspaper cutting.⁸¹ It is a possibility that the newspaper cutting mentioned the soldier in question: families tended to cut mentions and memorial notices out of the newspaper to be used in memorial tableaux. In the bedroom she found two photographs of soldiers framed upon the

⁷⁸ MO, SXMOA1/3/7/3 Folder 3/6.

⁷⁹ MO, SXMOA1/3/7/3 Folder 3/6.

⁸⁰ Parrott, ‘Bringing Home the Dead’ p.136.

⁸¹ MO, SXMOA1/3/7/3 Folder 3/6.

mantlepiece.⁸² The frame with the poppy attached to it is somewhat significant: it indicates one of the intersections between private and public mourning. The poppies, made by disabled soldiers and sailors from 1926 onwards, became a focal point of November remembrance practices. By 1938, a conservative estimate of 2 million poppies were sold annually.⁸³ The poppy would have presumably been fastened to the frame from at least the previous November, eight months previously, and was seemingly deemed an appropriate long-term ornament for the frame. Here, popular remembrance practices (the poppies) and intimate family memorials (the photograph) intersected within the home to create a personal memorial which was nonetheless tied to wider remembrance practices.

Many of the themes addressed in this chapter converge in Vera Brittain's experiences of mourning after the loss of her fiancé in the First World War. Her struggle after the loss of both her fiancé, Roland Leighton, and her brother, Edward Brittain, has proved one of the most enduring legacies of the First World War. The first print run of her biography, *Testament of Youth*, sold out within a single day in 1933, and after a post-war lull was republished by Virago in the late 1970s, rekindling its popularity and leading to it being televised by the BBC. In 2014 it was turned into a film. Although Brittain is best known for her *Testament of Youth* it is her *Chronicle of Youth*, a published version of her diary, that furnishes immediate glimpses into her actions after the loss of her fiancé and which is focused on here. The *Chronicle of Youth*, a curated edition of the diary she kept between 1913 and 1917 (between the ages of 20 and 24), follows her experiences of first the war and then losing her fiancé Roland Leighton. In her *Testament of Youth* she chronicles the loss of her fiancé and brother, but in the *Chronicle* the death of her fiancé was the tragic finale: the death of her brother Edward would not happen until 1918. As a representative case study, she was not an untypical example of those who suffered when an officer passed away. Brittain was brought up in a small northern town as part of an upper middle class manufacturing family and Leighton an upper class literary family.⁸⁴ Her diary begins with her deciding to sit the entrance exams for Oxford and covers her first year at Somerville College before suspending her studies to become a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) member of the British Red Cross in October 1915. Her diary contains many of the ways of mourning already discussed: mementos of the dead, special rituals associated with their memory, and hints at the chapters to come in the reliance of Brittain and Leighton's family on the production and dissemination of ephemera.

⁸² MO, SXMOA1/3/7/3 Folder 3/6.

⁸³ Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory* (London, 1994), p. 108.

⁸⁴ Richard Badenhansen, 'Mourning through Memoir: Trauma, Testimony, and Community in Vera Brittain's "Testament of Youth"', *Twentieth Century Literature* 49:4 (2003), p. 426.

What is perhaps unusual in her accounts is her status: as the fiancée of Leighton she occupied a liminal space within a strict social hierarchy, relying on the sympathy of his family to be allowed into their mourning practices. Brittain's descriptions of mourning highlight the semi-official place the fiancée had in family mourning practices. It was at the discretion of his family, and primarily his mother, that she was included or excluded from familial mourning practices. Indeed, close reading suggests that while she was involved in some of the family mourning practices, such as the dissemination of Leighton's effects, she was not privy to all of them. She negotiated this semi-official space as best she could, and it is clear that she was strongminded in her ideas of what a fiancée in mourning should do, such as don mourning clothes, cherish returned personal effects, and wear a memorial badge.

The *Chronicle of Youth* captures glimpses into attitudes towards public displays of mourning at the time among youthful upper class circles. Before the death of her fiancé, and indeed before she had begun training as a nurse, Brittain wrote a passage in her diary concerning Hilda Lorimer who tutored at Somerville College. Lorimer gave a tutorial the day after she found out her brother had been killed. One of the other students had expected Lorimer to 'be very much upset, but instead of this Miss Lorimer took the class with her usual thoroughness & care' and the only hint of her grief was that 'her usually bright hair was quite dull & her eyes dim & tired looking'.⁸⁵ This prompted a discussion about the nature of grief among the students: Brittain's friend thought that this reaction meant Lorimer could not be very upset but Brittain disagreed, writing 'for those who show least care deepest.'⁸⁶ The display of emotion, or lack thereof, was discussed at length by the young women. The calm stoical resolve shown by Lorimer was interpreted differently by members of Brittain's cohort indicating that Lorimer's inherently personal display of grief could be interpreted differently among those who knew her in a professional capacity. As with earlier examples, hidden intangible acts, or thoughts only known to the individual, all conveyed a sense of loss which was not always articulated in other, more physical, ways.

This personal expression of grief was also indicated through the donning of mourning clothes. These public indicators of grief were still in vogue after a loved one had passed away in 1916, and Brittan chronicled her attempt to furnish herself in suitable mourning attire and to buy a mourning ring. Although the First World War changed the way that women used mourning dress, with it steadily decreasing in popularity throughout the war, it nonetheless remained an important ritual for many women.⁸⁷ Black armbands were worn by bereaved

⁸⁵ Vera Brittain, *Chronicle of Youth* (London, 1981), p.149.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Lucie Whitmore, 'A Matter of Individual Opinion and Feeling': the changing culture of mourning dress in the First World War', *Women's History Review* 27:4 (2018), p. 2.

soldiers and it was possible for them to cover a top button in black crape to signify that a loved one had died.⁸⁸ Brittain documented people's initial reactions to her mourning attire, commenting in her diary that the crowd in Brighton 'showed their vulgarity by gazing inquisitively at my mourning as I went by.'⁸⁹ Deciding to don mourning garments was a highly symbolic gesture: it signified to the outside world that one was recently bereaved and that it should be taken into consideration in social situations. That Brittain felt she could don full mourning, which was usually reserved for close family and wives only, signifies the public role that fiancées were allowed to take, or at least the public role this fiancée took, and in this instance she assumed the same mantle as a wife.

While clothes could comfort the bereaved, and give a visible marker of the pain felt, they could also be the cause of emotional pain. While, for some, the return of belongings could be cathartic others had a very strong negative association with their return. Emily Brayshaw has written about the intense pain that the return of clothes could cause. As officers had paid for their uniform it was felt that this, alongside all other items, should be returned to the family. Brayshaw used Leighton's uniform as an example of how families could find these personal items 'perhaps the most abject, traumatising *signs* [sic] for absent bodies of all the soldiers' returned objects in World War I.'⁹⁰ Vera Brittain arrived at the house of her deceased fiancé's parents just as his belongings did. She wrote in her diary that 'it was terrible... all the sepulchres and catacombs of Rome could not make me realise mortality & corruption as vividly as did the smell of these clothes.'⁹¹ The visceral reaction to the clothes, as Brayshaw notes, had the potential to hurt as well as to heal and clothes could prompt a strong traumatic response, especially if they were torn or bloodied, in the individuals who beheld them.

Leighton's parents allowed Brittain to keep some of the personal effects returned to them. She recovered the letters she had sent to him, and managed to take those of her brother Edward to Roland which she returned, as well as a pipe and a fountain pen she had previously sent him, and a copy of Rupert Brooke's poems.⁹² Yet she was barred from taking the item most dear to her, or at least expressed as such in a letter to her brother; Leighton's exercise book full of poems, so she copied them into a small book of her own.⁹³ Brittain was allowed

⁸⁸ Whitmore, 'A Matter of Individual Opinion and Feeling', p. 6. There are some images of soldiers with crape covered buttons in the collection of Alastair Fraser which suggest that this could be used as an alternative.

⁸⁹ Brittain, *Chronicle of Youth*, p. 377.

⁹⁰ Emily Brayshaw, 'Remembering Roland Leighton: Uniforms as the materials of memory and mourning in World War I', in Zahra Newby & Ruth E Toulson (eds.), *The Materiality of Mourning: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives* (Routledge, Milton, 2018), p. 51.

⁹¹ Brittain, *Chronicle of Youth*, p. 382.

⁹² Vera Brittain, in Alan Bishop & Mark Bostridge (eds.), *Letters from a Lost Generation* (London, 2004), pp. 214–215.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 213–214.

to reclaim the objects that she had given Leighton but was not allowed access to any of the other items returned to the family, and it was Leighton's mother who was allowed to edit and publish the poems as the person with the perceived closest and longest relationship with Roland.⁹⁴

Brittain was also barred, although perhaps not deliberately, from the burial ceremony of Leighton's bloodstained tunic. In the foreword to the 1981 version of *Chronicles of Youth*, Claire Leighton, Roland's younger sister, recalled the moment that she and her father buried his 'blood-stained and bullet-riddled' tunic.⁹⁵ It was January, she was holding a pail of hot water to thaw the frosty ground, and both of them kept furtively glancing around for signs of Roland's mother who had not seen the coat since the bundle of Roland's belongings had arrived.⁹⁶ This was an intimate act of two family members obscuring the painful object from the eyes of a third. As an intimate family ritual, one in which Brittain was not invited to partake, this burial of the tunic became a small symbol of Leighton's death: the burial of the tunic in many ways served as a symbolic burial of Leighton's body. Yet, unlike a burial which customarily contained rituals and the attendance of family and friends, this was a painful, small, burial with no extraneous ritual attached to it. The item was hurriedly hidden from sight in order to protect Leighton's mother from its abhorrent presence within the home.

Brittain, having been excluded from some of the family memorial practices, formed her own mourning rituals by which to remember Leighton. These included physical mementos, writing about the deceased, and private rituals. In addition to the objects returned to her she took a small regimental coat badge from his clothes and made it into a necklace 'so that I can have it always around my neck.'⁹⁷ This action is highly reminiscent of the wearing of sweetheart badges produced in wartime. These were small talismans of the regimental badge, smaller, more decorative, and mass produced by manufacturers and jewellers, that were often gifted to women before soldiers went to war and could be worn as a brooch or as a necklace.⁹⁸ Penny Streeter, an art historian, argues that they were a living visible link to those absent from home, a patriotic reminder that one's loved one was away, or had died on military service, and often served as a sort of charm for both the wearer and the giver.⁹⁹ Here, we see Brittain creating a posthumous version of a sweetheart brooch: a reminder of the dead, tinged with militarism, that reminded her of her fiancé and of the way that he died. She felt an affinity

⁹⁴ Brittain, *Letters from a Lost Generation*, p. 215.

⁹⁵ Claire Leighton, 'Foreword' in Brittain, *Chronicle of Youth*, p. 9.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p.10; Brittain, *Letters from a Lost Generation*, p. 212.

⁹⁷ Brittain, *Letters from a Lost Generation*, p. 215.

⁹⁸ Penny Streeter, 'Sweetheart Badges and Mourning', conference paper at New Research in Military History, Cambridge University, 18 November 2017. Also see her completed PhD thesis, 'Symbolic jewels: the military sweetheart brooch in wartime Britain', (2018) University of Sussex.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

with this type of sentimental symbol but, with Leighton having not given her one before his passing, she fashioned one herself as a signifier of her loss and the public symbol this entitled her to take.

She also produced items of printed ephemera which she believed Leighton's mother would find comforting. She enlarged a photograph of the 'three musketeers', Leighton, her brother, and their friend Victor Richardson, and sent a copy to Leighton's mother commenting that 'Roland himself is so good that I can scarcely bear to look at it.'¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, following the tradition of publishing memoirs upon the death of a loved one, Mrs Leighton wrote her son's memoirs and went on to publish them in *Boy of My Heart* in 1916. Leighton's father also engaged in the distribution of ephemera and sent Brittain a plan he had drawn up of the place his son was wounded and the route he would have taken to the hospital clearing station.¹⁰¹ These ephemeral responses were not unusual: many people reproduced photographs, and some of those who had the social connections to find out the type of information necessary chose to draw maps of where their loved one had died. These types of ephemera-based memorial material were produced and used by the majority of people as part of the mourning process in the aftermath of the First World War.

As with others who used personal rituals to remember the dead Brittain wrote in her diary of one such ritual she was to perform monthly after the death of her fiancé:

On Sunday night at 11.0 – the day of the month & hour of His [Roland's] death – I knelt before the window in my ward & prayed, not to God but to Him... Always at 11 p.m. on the 23rd day of the month I mean to pause in whatever I am doing & let my spirit go out to his.¹⁰²

She remembered him monthly, reading his letters, 'crying bitterly', and leaning out of the window to 'pray to Him [Leighton]' at the time of his death.¹⁰³ On the first anniversary of his death she reflected 'it is absurd to say time makes one forget; I miss Him as much now as ever I did. One recovers from the shock... but one never gets over the loss, for one is never the same after it.'¹⁰⁴ Brittain used these monthly rituals as a way of ceremonially mourning Leighton. By holding a conversation with him upon the date of his death she provided a time to contemplate her feelings towards him and gave herself the space to work through the myriad feelings which emerged when she thought of his passing.

It is unknown how long these rituals lasted, as the published section of her diary ends in 1917, but Richard Badenhause, writing about the *Testament of Youth*, argues that the

¹⁰⁰ Brittain, *Chronicle of Youth*, p. 398.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 391.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 387.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

writing of the *Testament of Youth* in the 1920s and early 1930s was a way of attempting to recover from the trauma of loss. He argues that Brittain's resurrection of her dead loved ones recreated a community of understanding which she had lost upon their deaths and that it was this recreation which allowed her to complete her mourning of them.¹⁰⁵ A few months after Leighton's death, Brittain reflected upon a conversation she had with Lorimer who said that the dead should never be spoiled for them 'but would remain canonised'.¹⁰⁶ Certainly for Brittain the dead were not forgotten: they existed with her throughout her life and her daughter recalled the awareness of the ghosts she lived with and their presence within Brittain's subsequent marriage.¹⁰⁷ These conversations with the dead, enacted in the 1930s through the medium of print, were perhaps Brittain's final goodbye to the trauma that their deaths had caused. Brittain participated in traditional mourning practices, such as the donning of mourning clothes, the creation of ephemera, the discussion of Leighton with his family, and rituals associated with a specific day. However, these practices alone may not have been enough for Brittain and, as Badenhausen postulates, it was only in later life that she made her peace with the grief she felt upon the deaths of so many who were near and dear to her. This in part may be associated with her liminal status as the fiancée of Leighton: she was not fully recognised as family and could not take part in all of the mourning rituals they enacted, although she was undoubtedly close to the family, which may have delayed a sense of closure. The death of her brother and close friend soon after, as well as her time as a VAD nurse, added to the trauma Brittain experienced. Yet she still participated in the social rituals of grief: from using material objects to mourn to speaking with the dead. This suggests the commonality of these practices, of the ritualised aspects of mourning as enacted through tangible and intangible actions, and the necessity of using private, quasi-private, and public markers of mourning in order to aid the grieving process. This was done in a culturally bounded way which used these forms as standard and provided a point of understanding for those who viewed the grief of others.

Those who lost a loved one used a myriad of ways to mourn their passing on an intimate scale. Some spoke to the dead, others preserved a space they associated with them, and yet more relied on official memorials to memorialise their loved ones. The physical and non-physical forms of mourning were used contemporaneously by those who were grieving to form a complex web of interchangeable ways of mourning the dead. Some memorial forms were more immediate than others. A photograph could be repurposed rapidly and hung on a

¹⁰⁵ Badenhausen, 'Mourning through Memoir', p. 424.

¹⁰⁶ Brittain, *Chronicle of Youth*, p. 401.

¹⁰⁷ *Guardian* 'Shirley Williams: testament to my extraordinary mother Vera Brittain' 11 January 2015, available at, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jan/11/shirley-williams-vera-brittain-testament-of-youth> (accessed August 2018).

wall whereas a family had to wait for a soldier's kit, Next of Kin Memorial Plaque, or Medals to arrive. Items left in the home by the deceased could quickly become items used to remember them by and facilitate mourning that did not wait for official items to be made. Official memorials to the dead were therefore placed within the home after the initial shock had begun to fade and families could begin to think how they wanted to present the memory of their loved ones within the home.

Key to the person's memory surviving to the present was the telling and retelling of family stories of the deceased, that linked them with a particular object. Some objects, as in the case of the Evans family who reclaimed their damaged and unsanitary locket, formed the basis of larger repositories of family mementos. Their memorial items were placed in a special repository where mementos of other people who died in a sudden way, in this case the soldier's son, were added to them.¹⁰⁸ The personal nature of these objects has meant that while the objects may have survived the stories associated with them may not. Contemporaneous reports of their use within the home are therefore important in ascertaining the ways in which they were used in a domestic space. Public initiatives such as the Mass Observation mantlepiece directives allow a glimpse into their usage and indicate the commonality of First World War objects within the home. The majority of mourning occurred in the home: it was where families recounted tales, offered solace, and attempted to reconstruct their lives. Yet because of the intimate nature of this, and the verbal nature this often took, the evidence for this occupies a liminal space as is perhaps fitting for so intimate a phenomenon.

Despite the intimate setting of the home as central to these types of memorialisation, there was a strong social element within these constructions of family mourning. The framing and display of mourning material allowed people who were invited into the home to share in the grief that the family felt. Some preferred to hide these objects of grief and others combined personal mourning rituals with the display of some mourning material within the quasi-private areas of their home. This choice in the extent to which grief was exposed to the outside world can also be seen in the memorial material broadcast to the outside world: private words could be emblazoned on headstones in such a way that, while the meaning was known to the family, the significance of the words chosen was not immediately clear to the observer. While memorial material within the home, such as framed items, were not exclusive to immediate family members, they were nonetheless the main group of people who engaged with these memorial forms which were displayed as a permanent fixture within the home. The next step in the dissemination of familial grief was to project the message that the family was in mourning onto the outside world through the dissemination of memorial cards and letters. This

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Terry Evans, 15 March 2016.

posting of memorial items began to link family to the outside world and increased the visibility of fictive kin networks and communities of grief.

Chapter 4

Posting Grief

As well as within the realm of the home, families attempted to influence the formation of memorials outside of it. The memorial forms created by the families were sent into the homes of others, and primarily the homes of extended friends and family, as a way of both commemorating the dead, but also as a way of shaping the memory of an individual in spaces external to the family home. This chapter is concerned with the ways in which bereaved families negotiated the social terrain of memorialising their loved ones in the quasi-private sphere, through letters and ephemera which could be sent into other homes and used by extended family and friends as a point of memorialisation. Instead of the families focusing inwards towards memorialisation in the home, by using the postal system to send ephemeral items which described their grief, they extended their commemoration of the dead into the homes of others. This chapter examines, not only the ways in which family and close friends were informed of the grief felt by close family, but by the ways in which epistolary fictive kin networks were called into action through the death of a loved one in wartime and how these responses were later incorporated into memorial ephemera. Extended family and friends who lived nearby were often informed of the death verbally, but the postal network served to inform family friends of loss, and often those both near and far received a memento of the deceased in the form of a memorial card. These forms of memorial could be expanded, and memorial books could be written to commemorate individuals which were sent to friends and family. Condolence letters, received immediately after the death of a loved one, were incorporated into these memorial forms, and the epistolary networks from which these inclusions were drawn could extend far beyond immediate friends and family. The families of the deceased also utilised the medium of letter writing to extend their personal feelings of loss and commemorate their loved one in a national setting. The IWM's 'Bond of Sacrifice' collection, an initiative begun in 1917 to collect images of soldiers, which quickly morphed to include photographs of the fallen, contains letters describing loss in addition to photographs of the deceased. These networks of mourning, maintained through the postal system, emphasise the role of communication with others when remembering the dead while highlighting the ways that families attempted to control the memory of their loved one. This might take the form of a personal letter, or the dissemination of images to people who were perfect strangers, such as the curatorial staff at the IWM, but nonetheless these activities shared the common characteristic of projecting grief outside of the family home and into an external space in the form of letters and photographs.

The forms of material discussed here, memorial cards, letters, and other ephemeral items produced solely for family and friends, have tended to be understood as the preserve of the middle class. To some extent this is reflected in the material that has survived. Letters from middle and upper class mourners tend to have survived in greater numbers: archives of working class letters have not survived in the same way. However, it is not uncommon to see memorial cards for miners, who may have been wealthy compared to some other labourers, but were by no means in receipt of the level of income commonly associated with the middle class. Nor is it unusual to see working class families writing to those who they feel can help commemorate their loved one. There were, of course, differences in the ways in which people were memorialised. Printed booklets, or even full books, containing letters and personal testimonies of family friends were common during the First World War. These printed books were out of the reach of many, and nearly all were published by the reasonably well-off families of officers.

Patronage networks were utilised by working and middle class parents, and by wives who were seeking information about their missing family members. This seeking of aid was also utilised when their loved ones were alive, and could take the form of attempting to keep them out of harm's way. For example, the First World War general, Sir Henry Horne, received 'a constant stream of letters from parents seeking to obtain "safe billets" for their sons.'¹ Pat Jalland has written in some detail about Lady Violet Cecil, whose networks of grief, communities of the bereaved, friends, families, and acquaintances, who offered solace to one another, not only encompassed friends and family, but was extended to the working class families of those who were killed along with her son.² Cecil was able to tell parents and wives of those missing during the retreat from Mons in August 1914 that their loved ones were killed near the village of Villers Cotterets. As the officers' families had launched an investigation into the whereabouts of their soldiers, and Cecil took the time to write them detailed accounts of the events leading up to their loved one's death, the families knew far more than others of the same class in similar situations.³ The letters sent to Cecil in thanks for her actions reveal a varied network of people who engaged with the photographs of the graves she included in the letters to form their own memorials. One woman wrote to her, thanking her for the image

¹ Simon Robbins, *British Generalship During the Great War: The Military Career of Sir Henry Horne (1861–1929)* (London, 2016), p. 269.

² Pat Jalland, *Death in War and Peace* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 35–56. Networks of grief owe much to Winter's 'fictive kin networks', of those who were unrelated to one another but formed active communities of remembrance. See, Jay Winter, 'Kinship and Remembrance in the Aftermath of the Great War', in Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan (eds.), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 40. 'Networks of grief' are taken to be slightly different to the groups Winter describes, instead they are comprised of family, friends, and acquaintances and are, as such, more socially bounded than the remembrance practitioners he discusses.

³ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 46.

included in Cecil's letter and commenting 'I am going to have the Photo [sic] enlarged for I am sure that it will make a most beautiful picture'.⁴ These letters formed networks of grief: Cecil received letters sent by mothers of soldiers her son commanded who sent her 'sympathy ... from a mother to a mother.'⁵ Cecil also received letters from those who were former colleagues of her son. In October 1915, she was sent a letter from the Royal Irish Constabulary; they had received a letter from the sister of Thomas Keating, killed with Cecil's son in 1914, who had served nine years with the police. They wrote to Cecil to request two copies of the photograph sent to them by Keating's sister, who wanted the original photograph returned to her; one to put in the Barracks, by popular demand; and one for 'a girl to whom he [Keating] was engaged'.⁶ In this way, sudden death opened up networks of communication and forms of memorialisation that were outside the norm. For example, one mother, writing to the IWM, noted that she only knew her son died in a Prisoner of War camp because other former inmates had told her.⁷ Former colleagues, siblings, widows, parents, inmates, and others all formed extensive networks of grief: swapping details of deaths, messages of sympathy, and photographs of grave sites.

In addition to these letters of loss, other mementos of the dead, such as small printed memorial cards (sometimes referred to as 'memory cards'), were disseminated by the families. These were common throughout Europe from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. Over the course of the period their design changed to reflect the turn away from overly ornate forms of funeralia. British memorial cards in the early period of production, roughly from the 1830s, were originally produced with ornate embossed lace-like designs, becoming plainer at the turn of the century, when cards were commonly chromolithographed in grey or sepia colours.⁸ Both types of card, the ornate and the plain, were bought as blank card stock and overprinted by a local printer. They were advertised next to the 'Births, Marriages, and Deaths' column in local newspapers. One advert, in the *Consett Chronicle* in 1909, by the printer Eleanor Neasham, indicated that she had 'a very Large and Artistic Assortment of memorial cards.'⁹ The bereaved could come to the office of the newspaper to select from 'a large number of suitable verses' or a printed copy of the selection could be sent. The price was 2s 6d for the first dozen cards, with the price decreasing to 1s 6d for each

⁴ Bod, MSS Violet Milner Papers, U1599 C678/2. Letter from Violet Oldershaw to Lady Cecil, 24 September 1915.

⁵ Bod, MSS Violet Milner Papers, U1599 C678/3. Letter from Lilley Adley to Lady Cecil, 27 September 1915.

⁶ Bod, MSS Violet Milner Papers, U1599 C678/5. Letter from M. Phelan to Lady Cecil, 1 October 1915.

⁷ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(15), Letter from M Smith to IWM, 26 March 1920.

⁸ Maurice Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera: A Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator, and Historian* (British Library, London, 2000), pp. 155–158.

⁹ *Consett Chronicle*, 5 March 1909, p. 5.

successive dozen ordered.¹⁰ The more elaborate style of embossed funeral card can be seen in disaster collections commemorating men who died in early mining disasters up until the late 1880s, when the more modern style became dominant, a trend which lasted into the 1930s [See Fig. 16]. These cards normally contained an ornate front cover, a pertinent verse on the verso, a personalised memorial on the recto, the deceased's surname, age, date of death, and in the case of disaster or war place of death, and the back cover was usually plain with only the printer's mark on it.

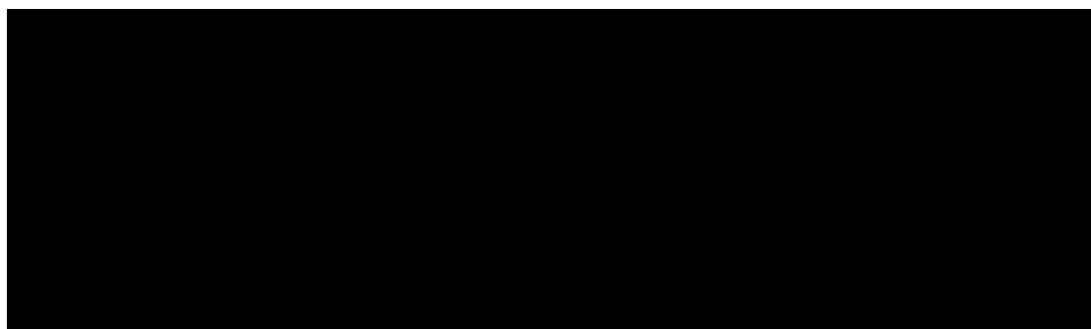


Fig.16. Two memorial cards in both an ornate and chromolithographed style.¹¹

These personalised memorial cards were not unique to those who died in war and disaster. However, the choice of wording ensured that the tragic nature of these types of death were fully realised. Memorial cards were a common form of general memorial material throughout the late nineteenth century and lasted into the late 1930s. Memorial cards to those who died in war or disaster were printed on the same card stock as those who had a natural death. The only distinction is in the special mention of the place they died, in a colliery accident, explosion, disaster, or in the case of war victims, the battle they were killed in, or the use of the phrase 'Killed in Action'. Generally, the memorial verse included in the card reflected the nature of these sudden deaths, although there are exceptions to this. The families of the deceased chose to note the tragic circumstances of death and augmented the traditional memorial card form with this information.

The form of verse which appeared in the cards was seemingly shaped by the printers who were commissioned by families to overprint the blank card stock. Printers of memorial cards such as A. McCallum of Newcastle-upon-Tyne offered pamphlets to the families and friends of the bereaved from which to choose meaningful verses for their cards. One such pamphlet, dating from the early years of the twentieth century states 'we can alter any word to he, she or they – mother, father, son, daughter or child, to suit any particular case.'¹² The

¹⁰ *Consett Chronicle*, 5 March 1909, p. 5.

¹¹ BM, 2006-58.2; G-458.1.

¹² BM, GS 20.2.92.

‘New & Revised Sheet of “In Memoriam Verses”’ offered to the bereaved to pick memorial messages from, contained a section of ‘Verses suitable for Sudden Death’, offering a choice of six four-line poems. Included is also a list of general quotations, with common memorial phrases such as ‘In the midst of life, we are in death’ and ‘Gone, but not forgotten’. Families could choose any combination of verses and sayings, and it was not uncommon for memorial cards to bear two verses, or a verse and a quotation. Among mining families, the verse ‘He left his home in perfect health, And little thought of death so nigh’ appears in several forms of memorial ephemera relating to mining disasters. This could be altered as appropriate, and the first line of the verse ‘He left his home in perfect health’ is found on the memorial card to Joseph Robinson, accidentally killed at Tanfield Colliery in 1890.¹³ It is significant that the collection of memorial verses includes a section for sudden death, as the possibility of sudden death linked to work, especially in mining communities and heavy industry which surrounded Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was possible for a significant proportion of the population.

These verses were not confined to memorial cards, and the same verses which appeared in personal memorial cards were also reproduced on other memorial ephemera. The verse ‘He left his home in perfect health...’ was subtly altered to address a collective, instead of an individual, and was printed on a sheet produced ‘In Loving Memory of the 38 miners who lost their lives in the View Pit, Montague Colliery, Scotswood, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Which was flooded on the 30th day of March, 1925’.¹⁴ A warning verse, found in A. McCallum’s booklet of verse, asking those who read it to prepare for death which could come at any hour, was seemingly common:

Take warning by my sudden call,
That you for death prepare;
For it will come, you know not when,
The manner, how or where.¹⁵

This was reproduced verbatim on a mass memorial card to those who lost their lives in the West Stanley Colliery disaster in 1909.¹⁶ Verses presented on memorial cards could therefore either appear after the death of a single person or could be echoed in mass memorial ephemera printed for the victims of a mining disaster. These memorial verses were not confined to a specific mining disaster, and examples of popular verses and phrases, in particular ‘He left his home in perfect health’, can be found on memorial cards and mass memorial ephemera throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Verses printed on memorial cards produced during the First World War tended to be slightly different in tone. They rarely emphasised that sudden death was lurking; instead, they focused on ideas of heroism and loss.

¹³ BM, G-458.1.

¹⁴ BM, 1985-72.2.

¹⁵ BM, GS 20.2.92.

¹⁶ BM, 1980.782.

Religious phrases could be used if the family chose, but these were clearly not always utilised by the families. Themes of loss, earthly mourning, a life cut short, or of the glory of the next life could all be emphasised as much as was felt appropriate. As with mourning material produced after mining disasters, the combination of verses and quotations available to the family meant that a personalised message could, to some extent, be created.

To aid families who had lost a loved one during the war, small booklets containing a selection of appropriate memorial words were produced. These items are slightly different to those produced by memorial card printers as discussed above. They were not a general list of verses which could be printed but were instead designed to help those struggling to choose a poignant phrase or verse for a stone memorial, memorial card, or even condolence letter.¹⁷ One such was created by Sheila Braine in 1918, published by the SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge), and was itself a form of memorial to ‘the dear memory of Bevil who fell at Gallipoli, 1915’.¹⁸ In the book of memorial verse, Braine curated selections of verse appropriate ‘for aviators’, ‘for seamen’, and so on. This booklet was seemingly produced for those with some disposable income, who were perhaps on a local war memorial committee, or who had to correspond with many people who had lost loved ones in the war. These very much echo the earlier booklets provided by printers to aid families in choosing the correct sentiment to publicly portray. These types of small, inexpensive booklets of memorial verse, categorised for ease of use, were brought into being when mass printing allowed for the cheap production of individualised memorial cards. These printed verses allowed families to express their grief in a culturally mediated way which offered some level of individualism while still adhering to a social norm.

The inclusion of a photograph of the deceased in memorial cards could intensify the individualism already given to it by selecting an appropriate verse. As Susan Sontag stated, ‘ever since cameras were invented in 1839, photography has kept company with death.’¹⁹ During the Victorian period photographing the deceased was not uncommon, if one could afford it, and those who could not afford photographs would draw a picture of their loved one.²⁰ Catherine Moriarty has highlighted the photograph’s power to ‘remind us of the humanity of the dead’ which led to their increased significance as personal memorials.²¹ This

¹⁷ Sheila E. Braine, *“That’s for Remembrance”: A Collection of Quotations for Present-Day Use, Suitable for Monuments, Mural Tablets, Memorial Wreaths and Cards, &c.* (London, 1918), p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁹ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London, 2003), p. 21.

²⁰ Pat Jalland, ‘Victorian Death and its Decline: 1850–1918’, in Peter Jupp & Clare Gittings (eds.), *Death in England* (Manchester, 1999), p. 246.

²¹ Moriarty, ‘Though in a Picture Only’, pp. 40–41; also see Nicole Hudgins, ‘A Historical Approach to Family Photography: Class and Individuality in Manchester and Lille, 1850–1914’, *Journal of Social History* 43:3 (2010), pp. 572–575.

was a deliberate augmentation of the memorial card form. Memorial cards were not designed to include images: the printing processes used for adding details to pre-printed memorial cards were not sophisticated enough to include an image of the deceased. In the first years of the twentieth century it was uncommon to include a photograph of the deceased within a memorial card and the only way to do so was to have a photograph printed separately and pasted in. Yet, some families did just this, and pasted an existing photograph into the memorial card, such as the family of Thomas Anderson, who perished in the West Stanley Pit Explosion in 1909 [See Fig. 17]. Due to this desire to include an image of the deceased, during the First World War some personal memorial cards were not printed onto the traditional folded paper but took the alternate form of a postcard. One such is in memory of George O. Holland, whose memorial postcard tells us he was killed in action in 1917 [See Fig. 18].²² Postcards were quick to produce, could include a high-resolution image, and could be framed if the family so desired. Some families were perhaps too poor to produce new memorial cards, or wanted to utilise pre-existing images, so used existing postcards with the soldier's portrait on the front and simply handwrote the details of their death on the reverse. Others simply chose to print a loved one's image with no name or extra details on the paper, because, as one father explained, 'it was printed really for relatives and friends who knew him [the deceased] personally.'²³

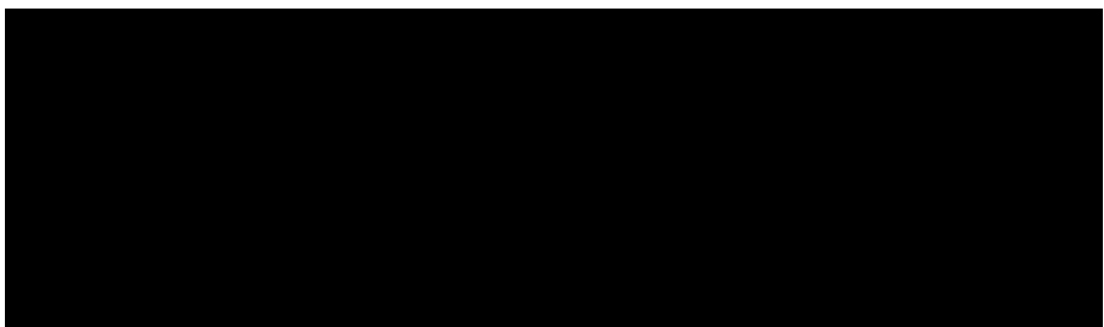


Fig.17. Memorial card to Thomas Anderson.²⁴

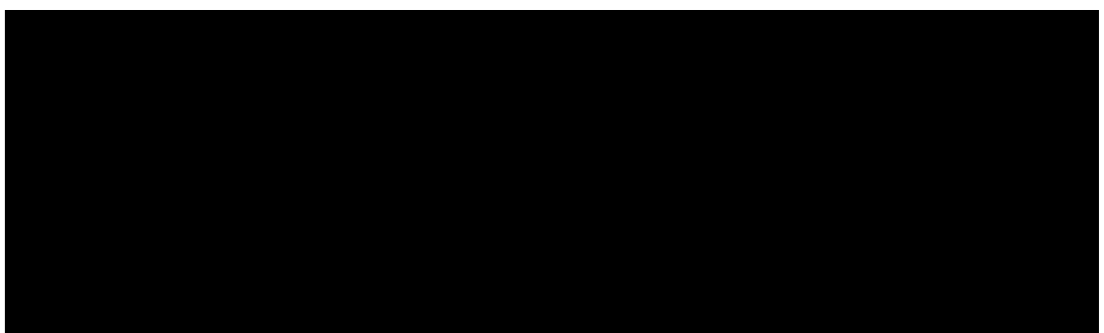


Fig. 18. Memorial postcard for George O. Holland.²⁵

²² Alastair Fraser, private collection.

²³ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/025(23), Letter from H Wills to Martin Conway (Director-General), 9 June 1918.

²⁴ BM, 2006-58.13.

²⁵ Alastair Fraser, private collection.

The First World War, in particular, brought to light a range of publishers, with varying amounts of legitimacy, who offered to produce personalised memorials to the fallen. Some individuals were rather forward in attempting to track down business. In 1919, an artist named Mr R. Jekyll Westley, wrote to the IWM asking them to forward the addresses of relatives of deceased soldiers.²⁶ He enclosed a circular outlining his circumstances:

Mr R Jekyll Westley, Artist in figures and portraits having joined the colours in the early part of the War, has now returned to his profession, and is anxious to undertake orders for Military Portraits of Officers and others who have fallen in the War.²⁷

In his letter Jekyll Westley comments that another publication was very interested in sharing his circular but unable to do so due to the wording.²⁸ The Museum responded by saying 'it would be quite out of accordance with the rules of a Government Department to give addresses for what is, after all, a public enterprise' but commenting that addresses could be readily found in Obituary and In Memoriam columns.²⁹ Another publishing company asked families to send personal details and images via a printed bookpacket, a type of large envelope made out of card, so that they could be included in a 'perpetual memorial'. The printed bookpacket is addressed to 'the custodian of the Perpetual Memorial Cards to the Fallen in the Great War', asking for family members to provide their signatures, relationship to the deceased, and address as well as the particulars of the soldier's career, death, and image, which is all to be sealed and returned to the company.³⁰ The bookpacket states that 'a document deposited at No.1, Lombard Street, in the City of London, provides for the permanent safe-keeping, in the public interest, of these Memorial Cards and portraits.'³¹ A verse by Shelley is printed on the bottom of the form, which also acted as the interior of the bookpacket. The company, the Commercial Art Press Ltd., presumably printed detailed memorial cards, yet no examples of this have emerged and the plan, if it was legitimate, to form a permanent memorial was never realised.

These ventures, offering to produce printed memorials, were not uncommon during the war years, and many memorial books were abandoned due to the sheer number of wartime deaths. A particularly famous example was the original 'Bond of Sacrifice': a memorial book dedicated to Officers, begun in 1914 by Col. L. A. Clutterbuck, Col. W. T. Donner, and Commander C. A. Davis. Published by 'The Anglo-African Publishing Contractors', the book was supposed to memorialise individual soldiers. An excerpt from an incomplete version of the book read:

²⁶ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/027(30), Letter from R Jekyll Westley to IWM, 10 March 1919.

²⁷ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/027(31), Circular from R Jekyll Westley [1919].

²⁸ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/027(30), Letter from R Jekyll Westley to IWM, 10 March 1919.

²⁹ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/027(29), Letter from IWM to R Jekyll Westley, 11 March 1919.

³⁰ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(126).

³¹ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(126).

It has been keenly felt, not only by relatives and friends of British officers fallen in the great war, but by the public in general, that the memoir of those who sacrificed their lives for the Cause of King and Country should be honoured in a lasting form, so that the tradition of their toll, bravely paid to the Empire in the hour of extreme need, when the balance of their fate was trembling for the weight of perhaps one single man, to decide the national existence and supremacy of either side, may be immortalised for generations to come. With this object in view, this work has been compiled, and the reader, in studying its outer appearance and turning over its leaves, sparkling with the most brilliant of British names, will realise what this production means to our nation, and especially as an invaluable heirloom in family libraries.³²

There were two volumes of the 'Bond of Sacrifice' published before it was realised that demand could not be kept up with. In 1917, in the *Daily Mail*, the three editors announced their resignation from their positions with the Anglo-African Publishing Contractors and indicated the cessation of the series.³³ These half-completed memorial forms highlight the importance of individualised points of memory in the midst of mass death. They also demonstrate the milieu of memorial forms, and companies who offered their services to help create commemorative items, both during the war and in the interwar period. Families could actively choose which companies they wanted to memorialise their loved ones and there was a large market for this which relied on the bereaved to operate.

Memorial booklets, commissioned by families and produced in small print runs, were a common form of memorial item printed throughout the war. These booklets, commemorating the deeds of soldiers (most commonly officers), were increasingly used throughout the First World War by the middle and upper classes. Seemingly, this is another case of memorial forms being heavily influenced by Victorian culture. Jalland notes that the tradition of writing memorial books about the dead was a popular Victorian mourning practice.³⁴ This was revived during the First World War to memorialise the deaths of middle and upper class family members. It was most often parents of the deceased who created these books and booklets for family and friends, although when the demographics of the dead, three quarters of whom were under thirty years of age and unmarried, are taken into account this goes a great way towards explaining the vast proportion of these having been created by parents. The booklets were of varying lengths, often between eight and twenty pages, and tended to include an image of the deceased. A short biography of the deceased was always included and the booklet normally contained printed excerpts from letters of condolence received by respected members of the community, such as a former schoolmaster, vicar, or military commander.³⁵

³² BL, J/9086.i.19.

³³ *Daily Mail*, 2 April 1917, p. 6.

³⁴ Pat Jalland, 'Victorian Death and its Decline: 1850–1918' 1918', in Peter Jupp & Clare Gittings (eds.), *Death in England* (Manchester, 1999), p. 246.

³⁵ Some families printed special poems written by these members of the community, such as the family of Philip George Holmes. British Library, Tab.11748.aa.2.(182).

These condolence letters were part of a wider tradition of epistolary mourning networks which were active during the First World War. Through writing to those who had been bereaved, middle class communities connected by rank, business, or even being in similar circumstances arose.³⁶ Families very often received a letter from a commanding officer in the event of death, thus meaning that the majority of those who lost a loved one were sent at least one letter of condolence. In addition, the families would often be contacted by friends and comrades of the deceased offering insights into their family member's last moments, and containing words of comfort.³⁷ Jalland has noted the 'therapeutic value' of condolence letters, noting that 'middle- and upper- class Victorians usually took trouble to write considered letters which would give comfort and show sympathy.'³⁸ Yet she questions their value in relation to the First World War, citing William Cecil, Bishop of Exeter, who lost three sons during the war and burned all condolence letters received, as they 'added so much to his suffering.'³⁹ Jalland further claims that letters often lost their meaning in the continued face of mass death, stating that 'it was necessary that the rhetoric of patriotism and glory continue to be employed in condolence letters long after most people had lost faith in it.'⁴⁰ In contrast to this, Jessica Meyer has argued for the importance of letters of condolence in wartime, both for civilians and soldiers. She claims that these different groups used different languages to frame their letters; the former using the language of worthy sacrifice and the latter the commemoration of the soldierly qualities that the individual had embodied.⁴¹ The heroic language meant that their military role was 'defined by their deaths as much as by their lives'.⁴² These letters, despite the scepticism displayed by Jalland, nonetheless had a comforting role and their ubiquity during the First World War was, in part, due to the social role that they fulfilled.

These letters, offering words of hope, pride, and redemption, whether they were believed to be helpful by the parents who included them or not, were published within memorial booklets. Sometimes letters from friends were included, such as in the memorial booklet for Captain T. I. W. Wilson, Manchester Regiment, whose friend wrote 'I cannot trust myself to speak of your son, but I have lost a dear friend and feel that loss very bitterly.'⁴³ Occasionally, letters from nurses who were present at the soldier's death and later wrote to parents were featured. Sister Bateman wrote to the mother of Second Lieutenant W. J.

³⁶ Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 76–77.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

³⁸ Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford, 1996), p. 307.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 75.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴³ [Unknown Author], *Memoir and Letters of T.I.W. Wilson, M.C. Captain Manchester Regiment* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd. 1917), p. 52.

Clappen, Durham Light Infantry, explaining that her son passed away peacefully and that ‘all was done that possibly could be’: a letter which was then published in a memorial booklet dedicated to him.⁴⁴ These traditional booklets, revived in wartime among wealthy families, enshrined both the war and the family’s pain. A physical memento of the dead, which focused on lifetime achievements as well as on the feelings of those who knew them, offered solace and the writing of the book, or the collection of materials for those who hired a ghost writer, formed part of the grieving process for the family.

Parents were the main contributors to this memorial book genre; however, memorial poems were sometimes written and published by siblings of the deceased. One such example comes from the younger brothers and sisters of Edmund Llewelyn Lewis, a soldier who died during the First World War, who published a small pamphlet entitled *Gaudeamus: Thoughts and Recollections*, and dedicated the volume ‘To Father and Mother... Whose spirit, eager, pure, was fruit of your own spirits.’⁴⁵ There were contributions from all five of his siblings; Nesta, Mary, Gwilym, Herbert and Ruth, with varying levels of poignancy and directness in each contribution. Alongside poems, extracts from letters and conversations were included. These offer glimpses into the feelings of loss felt by the siblings upon their brother’s death. In a letter written by Gwilym, he noted ‘I see from the copy of the telegram that poor old Ed. has gone. Ever since he was reported missing there seems to have been such a *hole* in the family.’ The siblings fulfilled the parental role and provided a traditional memorial volume to their brother, and yet they changed the standard form and made it personal to them, by publishing poems and excerpts from their letters, instead of excerpts from letters penned by others who had known him.

Memorial pamphlets could also become a point of fusion between personal remembrance and political motivations. A particular genre of this type of politicised ephemera emerged in the Welsh coalfields during the Spanish Civil War. A distinct variation on previous ephemera for the dead emerged after the Spanish Civil War and can be classified as half-memorial material and half-propaganda for the British Battalion of the International Brigade. The surviving examples were produced after the deaths of some of the thirty-three Welshmen who died fighting in the British arm of the Brigade. The International Brigade, organised by the western Bureau of the Comintern, had approximately 2,500 volunteers with around 100 of these coming from the Welsh coalfields.⁴⁶ The Welsh response to the war was particularly strong, emanating, as Hywel Francis notes, from the combination of a long tradition of extra-

⁴⁴ DCRO, D/DLI 7/122/1.

⁴⁵ IWM, Eph.C. INMEM K.3100-K.08.

⁴⁶ Lewis Mates, ‘Durham and South Wales Miners and the Spanish Civil War’, *Twentieth Century British History* 17:3 (2006), pp. 374–375.

parliamentary political activity and of a particular kind of internationalism which produced a certain strain of 'proletarian internationalism' keen to participate in the fight against fascism.⁴⁷ The volunteers viewed the Spanish Civil War as important for democracy worldwide and argued that any Welshmen who died in this battle did not die in vain, following a commonplace in the First World War.⁴⁸ This may have been necessary: Natalie Stuart highlights the animosity faced by the families of those whose loved ones had left Wales to fight. During the course of her doctoral research Stuart interviewed one mother who received a telegram saying that her son was wounded and the postman who delivered it to her commented that it was 'a pity he [her son] wasn't killed.'⁴⁹ Memorial material produced after their demise highlighted this attitude while also celebrating the life of the individual: politics and private grief were quasi-publicly fused through these memorial items.

The memorial material produced tended to be small folio pamphlets with an image of the dead, their age, and a small description of their life and death. Many of the mourning items for those who died in the Spanish Civil War were printed by Enoch Collins, a self-proclaimed 'Comrade in Industry and fellow trade unionist'.⁵⁰ Unlike memorial pamphlets produced after the First World War they had a decidedly communist bent, as befitted their subject, and often labelled the dead 'working class heroes' who perished in the 'fight against fascism'.⁵¹ Francis suggests that the type of volunteer who went to Spain already had an air of celebrity about them: often they were well-known politically and 'many would have assumed the stature of local folk heroes because of their social or political exploits... so that those who died came to be seen as martyrs for the cause.'⁵² As with the fallen of the First World War, and indeed those who perished in mining disasters, these personal memorial pamphlets helped create a cult of the dead.

Letters sent home to grieving mothers from the conflict, such as those sent to the parents of Brazell Thomas, were printed in memorial material similar to the type produced in and after the First World War. A photograph of Thomas, his address, age, and the date of death with the words 'What greater love hath any one, Who dies that others might love' were emblazoned on the front page of the small pamphlet.⁵³ While most of the text is devoted to highlighting the just nature of the cause he died for, his 'parents and family' are given a small space to note that they miss him but are proud of his actions and his belief. They conclude,

⁴⁷ Hywel Francis, *Miners Against Fascism: Wales and the Spanish Civil War* (London, 2012), p. 23.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁴⁹ Natalie Ann Stuart, 'The Memory of the Spanish Civil War and the Families of British International Brigadiers', Unpublsh PhD thesis, De Montfort University (2001), p. 211.

⁵⁰ RBA, SC177/1.

⁵¹ Such as the memorial card to Tom Howell. Richard Burton Archives, SC117.

⁵² Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*, p. 180.

⁵³ RBA, SC177/1.

‘We are going to carry on the fight he failed to finish. **We hope his appeal for Unity against War and Fascism will not fall on deaf ears**’ (their emphasis).⁵⁴ A letter Thomas wrote to his parents, that was printed in this 1938 pamphlet, was repurposed in the late 1960s and early 1970s to garner support for a memorial to the Welshmen who died in the Spanish Civil War, which was eventually erected in 1974. The letter read:

Dear Mother, If you receive this letter it will mean that I will have joined in the same fate as has fallen so many [sic] of the world working class. There are thousands of the cream of our class who are paying supreme penalty in the struggle for a world fit for everybody to live in. But, for you, I am one in particular – your son. You must not grieve you must be proud.⁵⁵

This letter, written to the family, was shared in a public space repeatedly after his death. The letter is indicative that in the Spanish Civil War, as with the First World War, letters from those abroad were of great importance to the family. Through them soldiers could send words which would be used in personal mourning rituals, but also provided powerful words in support of the political ideology of the deceased.

These booklet memorials, produced during the First World War and the Spanish Civil War, illuminate the complex public role of letters sent by the deceased themselves, their friends, colleagues, and even other family members. Letters to the bereaved, although intended to be a private transaction, were not always that. Information was shared, phrases were read aloud, and excerpts from letters detailing camaraderie and loss were published. Letters occupied several spaces of intimacy. As discussed in Chapter 3, with the reading of diaries aloud and the display of a photograph of a friend’s deceased soldier child residing on a mantelpiece, the support of friends, and the ability to grieve with them, was an important part of the family mourning process. Letters from friends were expected and of comfort to the bereaved. However, letters and letter writers also occupied a semi-formal sphere. Acquaintances, contemporaries, and respected members of the community could and did write condolence letters to bereaved families. The very paper on which they did so was a signal of bereavement: mourning stationery was popular in Victorian Britain, with the size of black border reflecting the timing of the bereavement, designed so that the mourner decreased the size of the band as the mourning period continued thus reflecting the gradual diminution of the mourning period.⁵⁶ This did not change with the advent of the war, families during and after still used black bordered letter paper, conforming to traditional mourning practices.

The mourning material produced in the late 1930s was visually similar to memorial ephemera produced following the First World War. A memorial photograph of Henry Dobson

⁵⁴ RBA, SC177/1.

⁵⁵ SWCC: MNA/PP/35/53(12).

⁵⁶ Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera*, pp. 155–158.

looking straight towards the viewer, with his portrait faded around the edges, is very similar in composition to the well-known photograph of Roland Leighton, who died in the First World War, which is similarly faded and features his direct gaze as the focal point of the image.⁵⁷ The memorial pamphlets to the dead read much like the ones produced by upper-middle class families after the First World War in terms of their praise for the dead individual. However, the memorial ephemera produced after the Spanish Civil War was for a broader audience. It was not intended to solely be disseminated among close friends and family, but through a wider political network of those who knew, and respected, both the dead and the cause for which they died. It was a fusion of family and public mass ephemera which was used to spread support for the war among the Welsh southern coalfields. In this sense, this ephemera was quite different from the deliberately apolitical memorial forms which appeared after the First World War. However, while the contents were different, the significance of the form of the memorial pamphlet as a standard response to bereavement is significant. It marks this genre as a standard response to warfare and draws upon a rich tradition of Victorian memorial biographies. Changes in printing meant that these memorial booklets were, by 1914 onwards, cheaper and easier to print. Due to halftone printing being developed as a usable system for transferring photographs on to paper in the late 1880s, images of the dead could be printed and assumed their position within this memorial material.

This link between the images of the deceased and letters remembering the lives of the dead can be seen in other collections, notably the IWM's 'Bond of Sacrifice'. The 'Bond of Sacrifice' was an initiative by the IWM to capture images of soldiers, which between 1917 and 1921 amassed a public response of 3,000 letters and 15,000 images.⁵⁸ The idea of a National War Museum (so called until it changed its name to the Imperial War Museum in January 1918) was formed as a place where memories of the First World War could be stored and grew from a range of individual initiatives; most notably by Charles ffoulkes, Curator of the Tower Armouries, and the Conservative MP Ian Malcolm.⁵⁹ The scheme rapidly progressed with the support of Sir Alfred Mond, and the War Cabinet approved both the plan and a small grant for acquisitions, in addition to paying for secretarial work, on 5 March

⁵⁷ Photograph of Henry Dobson in Francis, *Miners Against Fascism*; image of Roland Leighton, *The First World War Poetry Digital Archive* image copyright The Vera Brittain Fonds, McMaster University Library/ The Roland Leighton Literary Estate, accessible at, <http://ww1lit.nsms.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/collections/leighton> (accessed September 2018).

⁵⁸ Catherine Long, 'Memory of the First World War: The Dichotomy of Individual Reflection and National Remembrance', Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2015, p. 2. Long catalogued the 'Bond of Sacrifice' letters alongside writing her MA thesis about the collection. Also see Catherine Moriarty, '“Though in a Picture Only”: Photographs and Commemoration', in Gail Braybon (ed.), *Evidence, History and the Great War* (New York, 2008), pp. 38–39.

⁵⁹ Gaynor Kavanagh, 'Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum', *Journal of Contemporary History* 23:1 (1988), p. 80.

1917.⁶⁰ The Museum directorate quickly started attempting to establish representative and widespread collections before items were lost in the war.⁶¹ As part of this attempt to capture wartime material, it was recognised that amassing images of soldiers was important and, within three months of the Museum being approved, there were notices in the newspapers asking for images to be donated. Initially, the IWM wrote letters to individuals asking for specific officers' images, but notices in newspapers quickly became their preferred mode of contact with families and eventually word of mouth meant that people began to donate photographic portraits.⁶² A photograph of the types of items sent to the 'Bond of Sacrifice' collection shows bundles of letters written on mourning paper, framed photographs (in wood, 'book' frames, and specially designed frames), commemorative scrolls, and a memorial plaque to an individual who died on the *H.M.S. Cressy* [See Fig. 19].

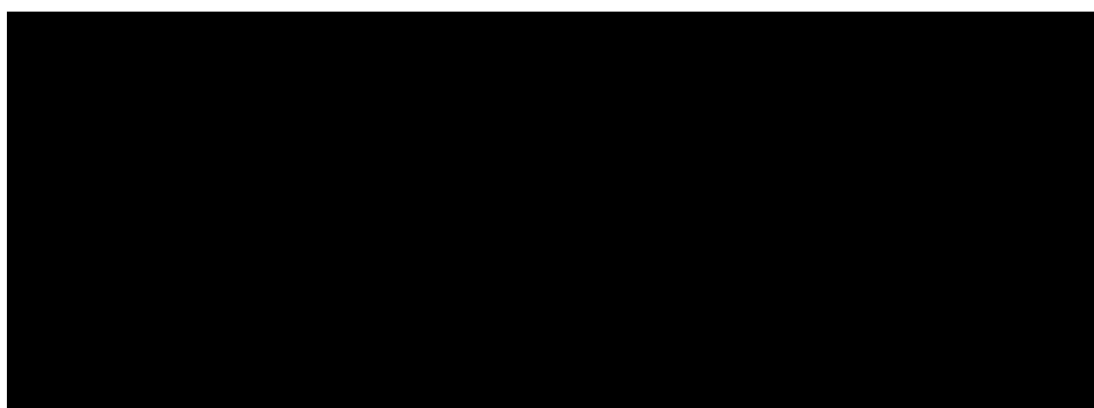


Fig. 19. Bundles of memorial letters and cards waiting to be sorted. Image ©IWM.⁶³

The 'Bond of Sacrifice' was originally intended to commemorate all soldiers who fought, dead or alive, but the focus rapidly shifted from recording the images of all soldiers to providing a repository of information about those who did not survive the war. In July 1917 the *Daily Mail* posted an article about the 'Roll for Heroes', stating:

The name of every man killed in the war will appear on bronze tablets in the National War Museum ... Photographs of every officer, decorated or killed, are being sought, and will be included in the collections.⁶⁴

By 1918, the Museum was accepting portraits from all soldiers who perished, but in 1919 a special announcement emphasised their desire to obtain 'a portrait of every British officer who has lost his life' so the extent to which this collection truly had a mass appeal is questionable.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Kavanagh, 'Museum as Memorial', p. 81.

⁶¹ Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museums and the First World War: A Social History* (London, 1994), p. 126.

⁶² For letters indicating their policy of collection see IWM, EPH/1/PHO/013(03), Letter from J. S. Ruttle to IWM, 27 July 1917; for letters indicating word of mouth see IWM, EN1/1/PHO/032(40), Letter from Humphreys to IWM, 10 September 1919.

⁶³ IWM, Photographs, Q 24093.

⁶⁴ *Daily Mail*, 21 July 1917.

⁶⁵ *Daily Mail*, 10 March 1919. For examples of general appeals for men and officer see, *The Times* 30 May 1918; *Daily Mail* 31 May 1918.

Similarly, although the call was for all soldiers in the Commonwealth, the overwhelming majority of portraits were of British soldiers.⁶⁶

The original aim of the 'Bond of Sacrifice' collection was to display these portraits, but by the time the IWM first opened its doors in its temporary home of the Crystal Palace in 1920 it was obvious, to the curators at least, that these images would never be publicly shown: there were simply too many. Some of the donors were somewhat shocked to visit the temporary museum and not see their loved one's image on display. One woman, having visited Crystal Palace, was upset that her son's image was not on display and wrote to the IWM asking why they were not available for the public to view.⁶⁷ Some contributors were sympathetic, with one widow writing 'I can quite understand that they cannot all be on show at once, as you have photos of so many dead ones & that sad people and unhappy homes thus was [h]as made.'⁶⁸ Another woman, upon finding that the Museum could not display the amount of photographs received, replied 'I did think when the photos were asked for they would be exhibited but I suppose that was my mistake.'⁶⁹ The IWM, while not able to exhibit the photographs, did allow members of the public to view individual memorials upon request which was appreciated by those who engaged with this offer.⁷⁰

Within the collection, based on the rank of the soldier whose image they are submitting, there is a seemingly middle class bias. Many senders were employed in middle class positions, such as nursing and the civil service. In their letters there tends to be less of a focus on emotion, they used implied meanings or other linguistic framings of death to imply the loss they felt. A businessman's wife simply wrote 'He has left a son age 11 & a daughter nearly 7 years who I am endeavouring to bring up as my husband would have wished.'⁷¹ These clipped tones, or occasional mention of a 'dear son' stay within the bounds of respectable ways to mark loss but without becoming overly sentimental in a letter to an institution.

Some parents were comfortable in sending a letter which contained emotional language at the prospect of a loved one's image being kept. One father wrote:

Will you accept my very best thanks for your letter acknowledging our Dear Boys photo. Amidst the turmoil these little things go a considerable way towards driving the dark clouds away & I am proud to know that our "Sonny" has a little corner of his own in the Museum.⁷²

⁶⁶ There are of course exceptions. See for example the family of Captain Anthony Wilding: IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(42), Letter from M. Anthony to IWM, 6 June 1920.

⁶⁷ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(50), Letter from L. Green to IWM, 24 July 1920.

⁶⁸ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/027(56), Letter from E. Murphy to IWM, 8 March 1919.

⁶⁹ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(51), Letter from E. A. Tickle to IWM, 27 September 1920.

⁷⁰ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(47), Letter from IWM to M. A. Peppitte, 23 July 1920.

⁷¹ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/037(6), Letter from A. E. Burnham to IWM, 4 November 1918.

⁷² IWM, EN1/1/PHO/027(36), Letter from H. Quibell to IWM, 13 March 1919.

Another mother wrote to enquire what size portrait was required, describing herself as a ‘very proud but sorrow stricken mother who lost her All (her only Son and child) [sic]’.⁷³ One father expressed his religious feelings, writing ‘I am greatly comforted when I hear his angel voice calling Regularly in my right ear the one mono sillible [sic] Dadda it tells me all I want to know, namely Gods goodness and wondrous power.’⁷⁴ The themes of pride and duty often emerge in the letters that expressed heightened emotion. One father wrote: ‘his mother and myself and his sister were very proud of him. He was a Real Good Boy with plenty of innocent fun and he never wrote home a grumblng letter’.⁷⁵ One woman simply wrote: ‘He was only a boy but God love him he well did his duty.’⁷⁶ There is a sense of comradeship attached to the posting of these images. Often, although not always, these letters containing emotional language seem to be written by those without a knowledge of the social conventions to be followed when writing to a civic institution. They rely on an informal style of address and a conversational tone, although some were very clipped and short, almost reading as an obituary notice, as in the case of Pte E. E. Burt.⁷⁷ Some donors were seemingly very nervous when approaching the IWM. One man wrote ‘we are only ordinary people, but I should be pleased to see his name amongst our Heros [sic]. He did his best poor lad.’⁷⁸ Some ask the Museum for help after donating their photograph, as in the case of patronage networks, for further information about their son’s final resting place or by requesting certain words be placed on his tombstone.⁷⁹ This was not part of the IWM’s remit and indicates the uncertainties surrounding the bureaucratic measures to do with the IWGC. It suggests that, to some people, these institutions were to some extent interchangeable, as they represented the mass face of official mourning.

Those who donated an image of a loved one to the ‘Bond of Sacrifice’ collection entered into a dialogue with the curators of the collection. The only time that the Keeper of Photographs lapses in his otherwise aloof and professional responses to donors is immediately after the declaration of peace. In a letter dated 11 November 1918, he wrote a letter to a Captain in the Royal Navy who had donated his son’s photograph:

I am writing this with the bells of Victory just starting to ring, and I cannot help saying how deeply I feel for the parents of the heroic men, to whose efforts we owe the glorious termination of the awful war. Like yourself, I have had two sons fighting, one in the M.G.C., and one in the R.N.V.R. I have not heard of or from the latter for a month, but trust that he is safe.⁸⁰

⁷³ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/027(38), Letter from E. B. H. Bigland to IWM, 11 March 1919.

⁷⁴ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(30), Letter from J. Sullivan to IWM, 27 May 1920.

⁷⁵ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/032(29), Letter from C. Edgington to IWM, 1 September 1919.

⁷⁶ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(53), Letter from E. A. Tickle to IWM, 21 September 1920.

⁷⁷ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/032 (11), Letter from H. Burt to IWM, [1919].

⁷⁸ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/037(18), Letter from H. Quibell to IWM, 11 November 1918.

⁷⁹ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/032(27), Letter from W. Barnett to IWM, 27 August 1919; IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(9), Letter from E. Hopgood to IWM, 20 February 1920.

⁸⁰ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/037(8), Letter from Keeper of Photographs to F. H. Peyton, 11 November 1918.

In the days after peace was declared letters to the public become far less guarded, indeed so much so that some of these letters were immediately marked 'not for publication' as they contained xenophobic comments.⁸¹ These were seemingly the only correspondence which were not calm responses from the institution.

Family members were those who were most likely to donate a picture of a soldier to the 'Bond of Sacrifice'. Parents were the most common donors, but wives, siblings and upon rare occasions, friends of the family sent portraits, taking on a surrogate role. One such donor was Bessie Smith, who donated two photographs together, explaining 'it is the wish of B. S. M. Wests [sic] family & mine that these photos should be placed together if possible, & we would consider it a very great favour if you could see to this for us, as they were both very old friends & were both killed near Arras & buried near each other.'⁸² Another donor wrote 'enclosed find photos of our dear son Pte E. A. J. Hunt, likewise, one of a most intimate friend, likewise Killed in Action whose mother & father having passed away before having forwarded photo of their dear boy on to you.'⁸³ The close relationships felt by these families was mirrored in donations by siblings, such as a woman who sent her younger brother's portrait to the IWM, writing: 'I feel I should like him to be among the rest.'⁸⁴ Brothers and sisters of the deceased were not the natural owner of the family archive; but, nonetheless, there are donations by sisters, uncles, and other close relations who assumed the parental mantle when necessary.

Some families sent their printed memorial books in addition to a portrait. One father sent an edited collection of letters sent by his deceased son, explaining; 'I printed a few for family purposes. I hope you will personally read them ... It is a splendid idea to set apart a place for such Books.'⁸⁵ Another explained he had 'melancholy pleasure in sending you the enclosed little book of poems by my late son.'⁸⁶ Donors were supposed to enclose biographical details about the man in the photograph submitted, however, some of the those who also gave a printed memorial booklet did not feel the need to supply biographical information about their sons.⁸⁷ One family provided no printed biography, but instead pasted two clippings from the 'Deaths' column of the local newspaper commissioned by the family.⁸⁸ The myriad ways in which families sent in biographical information about the subject of the photograph is significant. Far from simply describing the man, other ephemeral forms of memorial material,

⁸¹ Long, 'Memory of the First World War', pp. 22–23.

⁸² IWM, EN1/1/PHO/032(35), Letter from B. Smith to IWM, 1 September 1919.

⁸³ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(20), Letter from A. W. Hunt to IWM, 27 April 1920.

⁸⁴ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/037(4), Letter from H. M. Waithman to IWM, November [1918].

⁸⁵ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/025(34), Letter from A. G. Fowler to IWM, 25 June 1918.

⁸⁶ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/025(22), Letter from F. R. Coulson to IWM, 7 June 1918.

⁸⁷ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/025(23), Letter from H. Wills to IWM, 9 June 1918.

⁸⁸ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/037(36), Letter from A. Goodchild to IWM, 11 November 1918.

newspaper clippings, printed books, and pamphlets were all used in providing extra information to accompany this visual piece of memorial ephemera.

Those who sent items to the 'Bond of Sacrifice' were, for the most part, individuals who felt compelled to respond to the call for portraits and biographies as a way of commemorating their loved one on a national stage. Those who chose to donate did so for a variety of reasons, patriotism, love, pride, but all were donating to an institution with a name created to honour the war dead and to provide a national place of war memory. The collection of photographs ran from 1917 until the early 1920s, with one of the last letters accompanying an image being sent in January 1922.⁸⁹ The majority of letters simply contained the biographical information required by the IWM, yet there are emotions that seep through. This could be when the donor could not find the image of their loved one on display, but could also be earlier, at the point of donation when memories were recorded on the page and the donor felt the need to reach out and describe their grief to the one receiving the photograph. Some portraits were sent at poignant times of the year, for instance F. J. Gould who wrote; 'today is the anniversary of our son's death near Arras (1917) and we have sad pleasure in giving his pictures to those who can appreciate'.⁹⁰ Portraits were also posted on Armistice Day when peace was declared.⁹¹ These provided another layer of personification of the dead, significant moments for the family were projected through the donation of a photograph of their loved one.

These networks of grief - the posting of an intimate family history to be displayed as a point of national pride within the IWM, the use of patronage networks, and correspondence to provide succour in a time of need, or simply sending a memorial card - were all developed through the postal system. This was used more heavily in wartime due to the networks of grief which developed in the face of mass loss. In peacetime, those who died suddenly were likely to be mourned on a large scale in other ways; through instant community action, through the production of mass memorial ephemera, and through conversations. There was no large photograph collection in a national museum after a mining disaster. To individual families in the First World War, the ability to connect with others in epistolary form was of great importance. In particular, middle and upper class families embraced this; but glimpses of the responses from people with a working class background can be seen in how they connected to these large networks which projected personal and individual grief outside of the home. Families entered this quasi-public sphere through the posting of memorial cards to family

⁸⁹ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/047(78), Letter from Commonwealth of Australia Officers (on behalf of A. Bray) to IWM, 7 January 1922.

⁹⁰ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/025(4), Letter from F. J. Gould to IWM, 31 May 1918.

⁹¹ IWM, EN1/1/PHO/037(36), Letter from A. Goodchild to IWM, 11 November 1918.

members who lived elsewhere and photographs to the IWM's 'Bond of Sacrifice' collection. Even when this was sent to large institutions, the chosen language and materials used, such as the mourning stationery itself, meant that individuals shared their loss with the receiver. These acts of memorialisation were deliberate. Families chose to interact with other people through the postal system and project their grief into other spheres, be they domestic or national. Control over the way in which family members were memorialised, and feelings of affection for the deceased, drove people to interact with these outside initiatives in order to commemorate their loved ones in a way the family saw fit. A further extension of this was the use of newspapers in announcing grief. As was seen in one of the IWM letters, different types of printed ephemera were used in tandem, and a 'death' notice was used to provide biographical information to accompany the donation of a photograph. Far from the inward facing, deliberately decided upon, spaces that families chose to post items to, the use of the newspaper ensured the projection of grief into the public sphere.

Chapter 5

Grief in the Press

In loving memory of JOSEPH WHEATLEY, Yorkshire Regiment, beloved husband of E. A. Wheatley, Market Place, Houghton-le-Spring, reported missing March 26th, 1918, and since presumed dead. Death Divides, but memory clings. Ever remembered by his wife and three children.

Durham Chronicle, 25 March 1921

As an extension of the range of control the family had over memorialisation of the dead, many bereaved families chose to interact with local newspapers, thus signalling to the wider world the grief that they felt. This was slightly different from the personal recollections projected outwards, into other homes, and instead constituted families publicly declaring their loss through news print which, although it could be read by friends and family, was not exclusively written for them. Unlike families sending memorial items through the postal system, by declaring loss in the public realm of the 'Births, Marriages, and Deaths' column, those who were unrelated, and had no memory of the deceased, could nonetheless be informed of his death. Newspapers were used at various stages of grieving. First, they were used to announce that someone had died, or, in the case of wartime deaths, that somebody who had been pronounced missing was now presumed dead, and provided details of the funeral. Secondly, families and loved ones used the 'In Memoriam' column of the local newspaper to remember the dead in succeeding years. And thirdly, newspapers sometimes became sites of increased memorial significance when an image of the deceased was included in the newspaper. Special editions and commemorative pamphlets printed by newspaper companies memorialised the dead after mining disasters, emphasising the importance of the image as a memorial form when there was limited access to the body after death in war or disaster. Of course, not everyone posted notices in the newspaper when a loved one died, some could not afford the fee and others would not perhaps have wanted to announce their grief in such a public way, but nonetheless, throughout the early twentieth century these pages of the newspaper played host to myriad public responses to private disaster.

This interaction of the bereaved with the wider world through newspapers was made possible by the development of the provincial press, which flourished from the mid-1860s.¹ Combined with the telegraph as a means of quickly transmitting information, local newspapers quickly grew in popularity, as they were able to combine international news with local reporting. As their popularity grew, so did people's involvement with them as ways of communicating family news through the 'Births, Marriages, and Deaths' section. These sections were used by all and those who died in civilian accidents, through old age, or illness

¹ Maurice Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham* (Gateshead [1971]), p. 21.

were the staples of the column. However, as other forms of traditional memorialisation practices were adapted to aid the families of those who died in tragic circumstances, these death notices drew attention to the type of violent and sudden death suffered by the individual.

Local newspapers regularly mentioned people who were notable in the exceptionally tragic nature of their loss, such as Mrs Dixon, who lost her husband in the 1908 Washington Glebe diaster. The local newspaper noted that '[Mr] Dixon, we were informed, had been married about twelve months ago [to] the widow of a man formally killed at the Glebe Pit, and therefore great sympathy is felt for Mrs Dixon in her bereavement.'² Other tragic cases from the Washington Glebe explosion were also given special mention, such as 'Anthony Scott (or Hodgson) [sic] the back overman, who has been lost, together with three near relatives. Isaac Agar has lost two sons, and Fred Mannistre who was got out alive from the Tilly shaft, has lost two sons, one in Brockwell and one in the Busty.'³ Another news report, concerning the 1915 Quintinshill railway disaster in which two trains, one of which was carrying troops who were to be shipped to Gallipoli, collided at Gretna, described how 'one young woman, who had been married only three weeks, identified her dead husband in the public mortuary.'⁴ These pathos-laden tales which received special merit were, in part, a calculated way of arousing public sympathy for the families of the affected. These notable tales are significant as they indicate that this reporting style emphasised human loss in disaster narratives as paramount. By attempting to sell newspapers by relating these tragic stories they placed the emphasis of the story on the bereaved and highlighted the grief felt by the families in the wake of the sudden disaster. Newspaper reporting of disasters were sensational and revelled in gruesome detail in a way that reports about military wartime deaths did not.

The distinction between the reports about the First World War and disaster deaths is part of a wider construction of a wartime hierarchy of sacrifice. Although families at home knew that soldiers were fighting in dire conditions, and often died in highly unpleasant ways, newspapers tended to focus on brave acts and limited the amount of description about brutal deaths on the battlefield. However, the notion that soldiers were suffering, and paying a 'blood sacrifice', for civilians was widely circulated. Adrian Gregory has described the centring of soldier suffering, leading to a devaluation of non-military experiences, as led by civilians.⁵ Military deaths, in particular lives sacrificed by soldiers in the war effort, were deemed as the highest sacrifice. Suffering was central to this concept and civilians were highly aware of the needs of soldiers who had paid a 'blood sacrifice' and their immediate family. This privileging

² *Durham Chronicle*, 28 February 1908, p. 5.

³ *Evening Chronicle*, 19 February 1909, p. 5.

⁴ *The Carlisle Journal*, 25 May 1915, p. 6.

⁵ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 135; 294.

of the soldier who had suffered as a result of *war* is particularly stark when examining reports of Quintinshill: although the men involved were soldiers, they died a civilian death and were therefore treated in a similar rhetorical manner to those of other disasters. As the majority of soldiers had not yet fought at the front, and all had died in a civilian accident, the level of rhetorical glory afforded to them was not the same as their counterparts who survived the journey to Gallipoli, only to be slaughtered.

Although local newspapers functioned within the abstract realm of grief, they also existed as a physical product. As such, they were subject to the changes and constraints war brought, such as the shortage of paper. During the First World War, the number of deaths which occurred placed local newspapers under severe pressure, especially larger ones such as the *Evening Chronicle*, which was circulated throughout the North East. By mid-1916, the editors were openly admitting the pressure that the print space was under. The 'Births, Marriages and Deaths' columns were printed on the same pages as local advertisements and in June the *Evening Chronicle* was printing notices admitting that; '[due] to the pressure on our advertising space we have been obliged to hold over a number of Advertisements.'⁶ By 1918 they were printing messages stating that; 'owing to the great pressure on our space, we are unable to accept any further Advertisements for the "Evening Chronicle" until further notice. An exception will be made in regard to Births, Marriages, Deaths and Lost and Found'.⁷ Despite the circumstances necessitating a physical change in the way that news was produced, during the First World War, notices of everyday family events were clearly seen as a key component of the newspaper. By prioritising these personal columns local newspapers showed their alliance to bereaved families, ensured increased sales, and indicated their support for the conflict.

In addition to the standard 'Births, Marriages, and Deaths' column, local newspapers throughout the period included sections dedicated to detailing grief in different ways, such as a column entitled 'Notices of Thanks' from the bereaved, and an 'In Memoriam' column. This chapter will first discuss the 'Deaths' column of the newspaper: after a disaster loved ones posted details of the funerals, and during the First World War families used this column to officially announce the death of family members who had been declared missing. A discussion of the 'In Memoriam' column then follows. It is the 'In Memoriam' columns that are the most illuminating in terms of understanding the longevity of grief during the period. It is here that multiple family members noted their long-standing love for their lost one, where sweethearts and friends could publicly reminisce, and can be construed as both a genuine outpouring of feeling, but also as a performative aspect of the grieving process. Given the attention already

⁶ *Evening Chronicle*, 6 June 1916, p. 2.

⁷ *Evening Chronicle*, 2 May 1918, p. 2.

given to the multiple uses of photographs during the period, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the function of photographs of the deceased in the press.

On Saturday 20 February 1909, in the 'Deaths' column of the Newcastle based *Evening Chronicle*, the widow of Joseph Burn posted the following announcement:

Burn – West Stanley, 4, Agnes Street, Joseph Burn and son, husband and son of Dorothy Burn. Late of Bewicke Main. To be interred Sunday, Feb. 21., Friends please accept this, the only invitation.⁸

In the same edition of the newspaper another widow posted a similar request:

Cowan – 2, Benton Terrace, 16th inst., aged 66, Mark, beloved husband of Mary Cowan, who was killed by the explosion at West Stanley Colliery. Internment [sic] on Sunday at St Andrew's Church. All friends please accept this, only intimation.⁹

Yet more were posted by grieving parents:

Johnson – Stanley, Fanny Pit Cottages, 16th inst., age 15, Robert William, beloved son of Andrew and Margaret Johnson. Interment at Stanley, on Sunday. All friends kindly invited.¹⁰

One couple posted notices informing their friends that they had lost multiple children in the West Stanley disaster:

Martin – Stanley, 2 Manx Street, in the explosion, aged 21 years, John Willie, beloved son of Alice and Michael Martin, known as Johnson; also Joseph, beloved son of same, aged 14 years. Interment on Sunday. All friends kindly invited.¹¹

In the *Evening Chronicle* alone on Saturday 20 February 1909 there were 28 notices posted in the 'Deaths' column informing people about deaths which had occurred as a result of the West Stanley disaster. Yet more families posted notices in other newspapers. In addition to families personally asking friends and extended family to attend the burials a general notice with information about the funerals was disseminated. Readers were told that the bulk of the funerals would take place the following day and that 'three long trenches have been dug in the public burial ground, each trench to contain 30 coffins. The funeral of the Catholic victims will take place at 2 o'clock on Sunday.'¹² As a result of notices like this, the funerals in Stanley on the Sunday were attended by thousands of people.¹³ This also occurred after other types of disaster. After the Quintinshill railway disaster in 1915, a notice in the *Carlisle Journal* ensured that the funeral procession for the two local railwaymen who died in the disaster was led by 100 railway workers and attended by thousands more.¹⁴ Not only did individuals use the newspaper to announce the funeral, but, in the case of large disasters, it broadcast this

⁸ *Evening Chronicle*, 20 February 1909, p. 2.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Evening Chronicle*, 20 February 1909, p. 2.

¹² *Evening Chronicle*, 19 February 1909, p. 8.

¹³ Eleanor Neasham, 'Consett Chronicle Art Memento' (Consett, 1909), p. 6.

¹⁴ *The Carlisle Journal*, 28 May 1915, p. 10.

information over a wide local area, ensuring that a large number of people came to pay their respects to the deceased.

The county was particularly struck by the West Stanley disaster because it followed a year after another large disaster. On 20 February 1908 the Washington Glebe explosion killed fourteen men. Due to this, on the same day that funeral notices were being posted in the 'Deaths' column of the *Evening Chronicle* in 1909, the 'In Memoriam' column featured eight families who posted messages of remembrance in memory of those who had perished the previous year. Additional 'In Memoriam' notices were posted in the *Durham Chronicle*, with two families posting in both newspapers; the *Evening Chronicle* and the *Durham Chronicle*.¹⁵ These multiple postings, by those who had suffered for a year and those who were experiencing the shock of finding out their loved one was dead for the first time, foreshadowed the postings which occurred throughout the First World War, where 'Death' notices and 'In Memoriam' postings to war dead occurred contemporaneously.

Families could also publicly express their thanks for friends and neighbours who had provided succour after their sudden loss. In 1918 Mrs Jennison posted the following 'Thanks for Sympathy' message:

Mrs Jennison and family, Tyne View Terrace, Prudhoe, wish to thank kind friends and neighbours for letters and sympathy in the great loss of her dear husband, Lance-Corporal Fred Jennison, who died of wounds in France.¹⁶

Nine years previously in the wake of the West Stanley disaster, families posted similar 'thanks' notices in local newspapers, such as:

Mr. and Mrs. G. Armstrong and Family, of the Post Office, Stanley, tender their sincere thanks for the kindness and sympathy shown to them in their recent sad bereavement.¹⁷

It was rare for families to post 'Notice of Thanks' messages which explained the circumstances of their loved one's death, normally that was a given. However, there are exceptions, and after the West Stanley disaster one family wrote:

Mrs HODGSON, wife of the late ANTHONY HODGSON and mother of the late JOSEPH and SYDNEY HODGSON who met their deaths in the Burns Pit Explosion, on Tuesday, February 16th, 1909, wishes to tender her heartfelt and sincerest thanks to her relatives and the general public for the many condolences, floral tributes, tributes of respect and other kindnesses shown her in her recent bereavement.¹⁸

The 'Notice of Thanks' columns reside in an unusual space; the bereaved thanked those who helped in the immediate aftermath of their loss, yet they did so in a way which gained those they were thanking public recognition for doing so. The postings emphasised the helper's role

¹⁵ *Durham Chronicle*, 19 February 1909, p. 12.

¹⁶ *Evening Chronicle*, 2 May 1918, p. 2.

¹⁷ *Consett Chronicle*, 5 March 1909, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

as a good neighbour, as well as acknowledging debts of aid outside of the traditional people whom one would be able to thank, such as the general public.

Others used the newspaper to publicly appeal for help. During the First World War some people used local newspapers as method of discovering information about their missing loved ones. One 'Personal Advertisement' simply read:

If anyone can give Information of 36288 Pte. Alfred Scholefield, K.O.Y.L.I., missing since March 21st, will they kindly communicate with Lucas, Fenham Drive, Newcastle-on-Tyne.¹⁹

Some families used the newspaper to announce that they had officially given up hope, and that they now assumed their missing loved one had perished in the fighting. In a single 'Deaths' column in June 1919 two families decided that they would announce the news that they no longer assumed their soldiers were alive. One of the wives announced a funerary service for the 'deceased' in the same notice:

LAMB.- Gateshead, 5, Marton Pl., missing on March 26, 1918, now reported killed on that date, Sergt. M.F. Lamb, 6th N.F., dearly beloved husband of Mary Jane Lamb (nee Foster) oldest son of Robert Lamb, 1, Hopper St., Gateshead: aged 29 years. Service will be held at St. Mary's Gatshead, on Sat., June 7. 3p.m. All friends and neighbours kindly invited. Deeply mourned by his loving wife and daughter Nellie.²⁰

Some of these announcements, which declared that the missing were presumed dead, appeared quite some time after the assumed date of death. One notice announcing that Second Lieutenant Frank Mansfield was now presumed deceased appeared in the *Evening Chronicle* in June 1919. It states that Frank was reported wounded and missing at Garelle on 3 May 1917, yet the post appeared 5 June 1919. The date announcing his presumed death may be insignificant, but it also may have been posted on a significant date for the family, such as a birthday.

Families in the First World War used the 'Deaths' column not only announce the details of any funerals to be held but to signal to the outside world that they had at least symbolically given up hope of their loved one returning home. In June 1919 the family of Frank Mansfield posted in the 'Deaths' column:

MANSFIELD – Reported wounded and missing at Garelle, May 3, 1917, is now officially presumed to have died on or after that date, 2nd Lieut, H.L. (Frank) Mansfield, West York Regiment.²¹

Another family in the same newspaper on the same day announced that they were holding a memorial service in an attempt to find closure:

LAMB – Gateshead, 5, Maston Pl., missing on March 26, 1918, now reported killed on that date, Sergt. M.F. Lamb, 6th N.F., dearly beloved husband of Mary Jane Lamb (nee Foster) oldest son of Robert Lamb, 1, Hopper Street., Gateshead: aged 29 years.

¹⁹ *Evening Chronicle*, 2 May 1918, p. 2. The Commonwealth War Graves website does not list Pte Alfred Scholefield among the war dead, suggesting that he was not killed in the conflict.

²⁰ *Evening Chronicle*, 5 June 1919, p. 2.

²¹ *Evening Chronicle*, 5 June 1919, p. 2.

Service will be held at St. Mary's Gateshead, on Sat., June 7. 3 p.m. All friends and neighbours kindly invited. Deeply mourned by his loving wife and daughter Nellie.²²

This language was also mirrored in the 'In Memoriam' columns, for example, the family of Joseph Wheatley wrote, 'reported missing March 26th, 1918, and since presumed dead.'²³ By posting items in these columns it allowed a pre-prescribed grieving process to begin, one which relied on functions such as newspaper postings as a way of publicly announcing the family's loss, and leading to other rituals of mourning such as holding a memorial service, disseminating memorial cards, or indeed, on the anniversary of the death, posting an 'In Memoriam' notice in the newspaper as the Wheatley family did.

Not all those who posted death notices repeated the process the following year in the 'In Memoriam' column, yet, throughout the early twentieth century there were a vast number of people who posted a notice in this memorial section of the newspaper. The column provided a point of memory for the family and a place to publicly remember the dead. As Sheila Adams notes, 'In Memoriam' notices were written in a 'shared framework of reality' which allowed 'the individual to maintain a sense of social and biological continuity during a period of transition following death.'²⁴ Sonia Batten, writing about the column in the pre-and-post First World War years, argues that the 'In Memoriam' column was of increased importance to, and was heavily used by, families whose loved one was classed as missing and had no known grave, so could not be provided with an IWGC memorial headstone.²⁵ However, these columns were equally popular following mining disasters, and in cases where some bodies were found, suggesting that while this form of memorialisation may have had an increased resonance for those with no headstone to mourn it was by no means utilised by them alone. Indeed, they were as popular with families of those whose loved ones died of an illness as with those who died in war or disaster.

Usually, although not always, an 'In Memoriam' message was posted by the parents of the deceased or his widow. In particular, notifications related to the First World War were most likely to be posted by parents, reflecting the age demographic of the deceased. In addition to parents posting notices there were a vast array of people who provided memorial notices, from siblings, to extended family and friends, who posted for varying lengths of time. Individuals could have multiple 'In Memoriam' notices posted to their memory, which occurred most often in the first year after their death, but sometimes multiple memorials to the

²² *Evening Chronicle*, 5 June 1919, p. 2.

²³ *Durham Chronicle*, 25 March 1921, p. 1.

²⁴ Sheila Adams, 'Women, Death and *In Memoriam* Notices in Local British Newspapers', in Kathy Charmas, Glennys Howarth & Allan Kellehear (eds.), *The Unknown Country: Death in Australia, Britain and the USA* (London, 1997), p. 110.

²⁵ Sonia Batten, 'Memorial Text Narratives in Britain, c.1890–1930', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham (2011), p. 108.

same individual were featured for decades afterwards. Most commonly an 'In Memoriam' message in the newspaper was posted for a few years after the individual's death before ceasing. Stylistic commonalities can be seen among all of these postings: stock phrases such as 'ever remembered' are prevalent, and the date of death is nearly always mentioned. Some personalised their postings with verses or pertinent sayings. None of the 'In Memoriam' postings were overly personal, those doing the remembering were clearly guided by a standard form of memorialisation, and could choose how it was personalised but not offer an intimate message of their own which strayed out of these boundaries.

The ways in which these messages were presented differed within individual newspapers. People were far more likely to include a verse in the *Durham Chronicle* than they were in the Newcastle-based *Evening Chronicle*, possibly due to greater demands on column space in that newspaper. There were also differences in the ways in which local newspapers framed the obituaries of those who died in war. The *Durham Chronicle* began a 'Roll of Honour' column in the First World War, for those who had died in combat, as an alternative to the 'In Memoriam' column in the newspaper. This was repeated in the years after the war, appearing less as the frequency of memorials to the First World War dead also dwindled, before being resurrected in the Second World War, although it was never as popular in the 1940s as during the First World War and in its immediate aftermath. Other newspapers, such as the Newcastle *Evening Chronicle*, included military remembrances in their standard 'In Memoriam' column alongside notices where death had been caused through illness or old age.

There were few military remembrances from before the First World War, however, there are exceptions, such as the 'In Memoriam' posted yearly by Mr and Mrs Cave, the parents of a soldier who died during the Second Anglo-Boer War. They do not always mention their son's military status in their postings. Although Pte Cave died in 1902, it is only in 1909 that his parents mention their son's rank:

In loving memory of our dear son, Private Henry Cave, who died in South Africa, Vryburg, 1902, aged 20 years and 6 months, son of Richard and Mary Cave, of Houghton-le-Spring.
Seven years have passed, and none can tell
The loss of him we loved so well;
But while he lies in peaceful sleep,
His memory we will always keep.
Ever remembered by his father and mother, brothers and sisters.²⁶

The types of poem selected for Pte Cave's memorial in the newspaper is very similar to those chosen by parents in later conflicts. The 'In Memoriam' posted by Pte Cave's parents in 1907 reads:

In loving memory of our son, Henry Cave, who died in South Africa on Feb. 17th, aged 20 years and 6 months.

²⁶ *Durham Chronicle*, 19 February 1909, p. 12.

What pain he bore we never know
 We did not see him die;
 But this we know that he has gone,
 And could not say goodbye.
 Weep not, dear parents, tears are in vain,
 Your son you shall meet again.
 I am gone but one short step before,
 To welcome you on Zion's happy shore.
 Ever remembered by his loving father, mother, brothers and sisters.²⁷

These verses can be compared with some from the family of a soldier who died in the First World War, in which the sentiment is very similar:

In loving remembrance of our dearly loved brother, Gunner ROBERT DOBSINSON,
 R.F.A., No. 73418, who died in France on the 21st day of March 1918, aged 22 years,
 of Quarrington Hill.
 He sleeps beside his comrades,
 In a hallowed grave unknown,
 His name is written in letters of love
 On the hearts of them at home.
 Sleep on dear brother, in a foreign grave,
 Your life for country you nobly gave;
 No loved ones stood near to say good-bye,
 But safe in God's keeping you lie.²⁸

The verses selected for publication after the First World War have a tendency to emphasise the nobility of loss, lines such as 'the saviour calls the brave, our dear son's name will be among them' are popular ones in the aftermath of the war. As Carol Acton writes, within the language of mourning 'religious consolation and martial heroism and sacrifice were inseparable.'²⁹ Postings following mining disasters tend to focus more on the sudden shock of the loss, often containing phrases such as 'his death was sudden, the shock severe, we little thought the end was near.'³⁰ This phrase is repeatedly mentioned in poems and funeral cards to victims of mining disasters, and has a similar rhetorical effect to the verses from John 15:13, 'greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.' There does not seem to be much difference between war postings and those in the wake of disaster as to whether religious terminology is used. It was equally acceptable to use a religious verse which commented on the afterlife or a secular one focusing on loss.

The prevalence of military service was important to some families. For example, one sought to establish their military history, posting in an 'In Memoriam' column:

In affectionate remembrance of Alfred William, lost at sea, May 31st, 1916; also
 Edward Charles Victor, who died, Naval Hospital, Haslar, May 15th, 1907, beloved
 son of Alfred Larkman, Veteran. Ever remembered by his father and sisters.³¹

²⁷ *Durham Chronicle*, 15 February 1907, p. 12.

²⁸ *Durham Chronicle*, 21 March 1919, p. 4.

²⁹ Carol Acton, 'Writing and Waiting: The First World War Correspondence between Vera Brittain and Roland Leighton', *Gender & History* 11:1 (1999), p. 75.

³⁰ *Durham Chronicle*, 29 March 1935, p. 2.

³¹ *Evening Chronicle*, 31 May 1917, p. 2.

Others drew attention to their family's wartime service, such as the McLeans, who in the list of family members at the end of the remembrance notice include 'brother Josh (in France)'.³² These military family postings were a way of entrenching the idea of their extended kin as serving their country, as a way of perhaps elevating themselves from the civilian population by merit of their family's devotion to the crown. Those who held a particularly significant social position within civilian life were also defined by their profession, such as Willie Ferguson, who was dually remembered as a rifleman and as the 'late postman of the Newcastle Post Office Rifles.'³³ By mentioning these civic roles, of the soldier and the postman respectively, the families drew upon their social status as a way of defining their family's societal role and signalling this to those who read their 'In Memoriam' posting. As with other forms of memorialisation, these columns drew upon complex social practices, and they allowed individual families a way of identifying their members in relation to the outside world. The families were given a choice in the way that they presented themselves and, through these public columns, a way of forming their own family narrative.

The merging of different family memorials into one, as Alfred Larkman did with his sons, was reasonably common throughout the period. These types of newspaper memorial mirror family members being commemorated in tandem within framed items in the home. One such memorial was posted in the *Durham Chronicle* in 1920, where Mrs Knox posted the following:

KNOX.- In loving memory of my dear husband, Robert, who was killed at Framwellgate Colliery, 5th March, 1920; also in proud and loving memory of my dear son, John Robert, missing 26th October, 1918. "Thy will be done" is hard to say, But what God gives He takes away. Always remembered by his loving wife and family.³⁴

Here, the Knox family clearly saw the death of Robert Knox, in a mining accident, and John Knox, who went missing in wartime, as interlinked. This merger of war and peacetime deaths as linked through their sudden and traumatic nature, and in the case of John, without the sense of closure that a death notification from the War Office brought, is significant; it indicates that the Knox family, at least, saw the two types of sudden death as worth memorialising in tandem. A different set of 'In Memoriam' postings, which also commemorate family members in tandem, were printed in the *Durham Chronicle* a week apart. The 'In Memoriam' postings concern the Ferguson family, of whom three brothers were killed during the First World War. In 1917, two 'In Memoriam' notices were posted separately, one by their parents and another by one of the sibling's wives, but both mention all three brothers.³⁵ One family remembered both brothers in the same memorial notice: Frederick and Edward Ashman were brothers who

³² *Evening Chronicle*, 14 June 1918, p. 2.

³³ *Evening Chronicle*, 15 June 1918, p. 2.

³⁴ *Durham Chronicle*, 3 March 1920, p. 1.

³⁵ *Durham Chronicle*, 23 March, p. 2; 30 March 1917, p. 2.

died six years and seven days apart, both in mining accidents, and were therefore commemorated together after the second Ashman had lost his life.³⁶ This was a common pattern among those who had died in a disaster. They would be commemorated for the year after their death, then there would be no 'In Memoriam' posting to them until another member of the family died, when their names would emerge again. It is unclear why these men were commemorated together; their families could have thought it more fitting for them to be presented in the same physical space, and cost considerations may have entered into the decision to memorialise family members in the same post.

Often multiple family members, and occasionally friends, posted 'In Memoriam' notices on the date of their loved one's death. This was quite a common occurrence after the First World War, especially within the first two years of the deceased's passing. Pte T. Jaques received three separate postings in the year after his death; one from Mrs Law, Evelyn, Louie and Sam; another from his grandmother, uncle, aunt, Mr and Mrs R. Dugind, and cousin; and one from his father, mother, brothers and sister and Miss Lily Hewitson.³⁷ Yet another examples the mass of people who were personally affected enough to remember someone in the newspaper. Pte John Storey died in 1916. The year after his death there were 'In Memoriam' notifications from: 'his loving friend, Annie McLean, in Canada'; his 'loving sister in law Mary, and brother-in-law Tom'; and 'his sorrowing mother, father, sisters, only brother Tom; Pal, L/C Walker, brother-in-law Kit.'³⁸ Although unusual, this also happened after mining disasters, and in the year after Charles Chivers's death, in the Washington Glebe disaster, his wife and son, mother and father, and brother, sister-in-law and family all posted separate notices in the newspaper to his memory.³⁹ The men who were commemorated by multiple people at once were not often memorialised for as long a time as those who only had one group to remember them. Family and close friends posted separate 'In Memoriam' columns, perhaps as a marker of how well the individual was collectively loved by them. These multiple postings could also be taken as a sign of family tension; the family may not have communicated overmuch and therefore did not realise the others were posting notices. Multiple postings may also have been a sign of familial wealth. Nonetheless, multiple people felt compelled to participate in this public act of memorialisation, reminding both the readers, and other family members, of their commitment to the memory of their loved one.

Unique to the First World War related memorials were sweethearts who posted 'In Memoriam' notices, using the word 'sweetheart' as a way to mark their relationship with the

³⁶ *Durham Chronicle*, 19 February 1909, p. 12.

³⁷ *Evening Chronicle*, 15 June 1918, p. 2.

³⁸ *Evening Chronicle*, 25 May 1917, p. 2.

³⁹ *Durham Chronicle*, 19 February 1909, p. 12.

deceased. Walter Tilling's sweetheart, Laura Alder, posted an 'In Memoriam' notice every year, for four years after his death, until 1921.⁴⁰ Another woman, upon her lover's death, posted the poem "'Tis sweet to know we'll meet again, Where parting is no more, And that the one I loved so well, Has only gone before.'⁴¹ The types of message written play into what Acton has described as the glamorised role of the bereaved sweetheart.⁴² This constructed view of the sweetheart who mourns is given an elevated status as one who has sacrificed herself through her lover.⁴³ These women thus marked their relationship in a public space, and were afforded the same right in this respect as they would have done had they been wives while fulfilling their public role as the tragic sweetheart. As with Brittain and her donning of mourning after Leighton's death, these sweethearts assumed a public mantle of grief, and their postings played into a wider recognition of sweethearts as a social group and helped to solidify the public status of those who had lost a special loved one.

Although the mention of sweethearts was rare, friends of the deceased regularly posted 'In Memoriam' notices, and sometimes were mentioned in them if they had been unfortunate victims of the war. In 1920, a family posted an 'In Memoriam' not just for their son, but for his friend as well:

MESSENGER – In loving memory of Lance-Corporal Gilbert Messenger (stretcher-bearer, Lonsdales), killed in France January 12th or 13th, 1917, dearly loved son of Gilbert and Mary A. Messenger, Gill Head, Raughton Head, aged 22 years. Also his dear chum and dear friend, Jack (Nicholson), believed killed April, 1918.
'Tis sweet to know we'll meet again
Where parting is no more.
And that the ones we loved so well
Have only gone before.⁴⁴

Conversely, friends posted 'In Memoriam' notices alongside family members. The Slowther family from Felling posted regularly for three years after Alexander Slowther's death. In addition to his mother, father, brothers, sisters, aunt, uncle and cousins, he was also remembered by his friends. In 1919, three years after his death, a new 'In Memoriam' appeared by someone who had not posted before:

Slowther., - Felling. In loving memory of my dear pal, Alex. Slowther, reported missing May 31, 1916, Jutland Battle. Always remembered by his old pal, Joe Hutchinson.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ *Evening Chronicle*, 2 May 1918, p. 2; 2 May 1919, p. 2; No newspaper Jan-June 1920; 2 May 1921, p. 2.

⁴¹ *Evening Chronicle*, 16 June 1916, p. 2.

⁴² Carol Acton, *Grief in Wartime*, p. 18; also see Ann-Marie Einhaus, *The Short Story and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 90-94; Jane Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print* (Oxford, 2005), especially Chapters 2 and 3.

⁴³ Acton, *Grief in Wartime* (Basingstoke, 2007) p. 18.

⁴⁴ *Cumberland News*, 10 January 1920, p. 1.

⁴⁵ *Evening Chronicle*, 31 May 1919, p. 2.

It is possible that this posting only appeared in 1919 because his friend had also served during the war, and was unable to send his request to the newspaper during this time as Joe posted a further three more times until all postings to Alexander's memory stopped in 1923.

Upon occasion, friends could post 'In Memoriam' notices over decades. Although rare, John Wilson Hall, who after the first posting referred to himself as LCpl John T. Dodgson's 'pal Jack', posted an 'In Memoriam' notice remembering his friend from the year after Dodgson's death, until the early 1930s.⁴⁶ Lengthy posts such as Jack's were uncommon, yet, there were some people who posted until well into the 1930s, and some 'In Memoriam' postings continued beyond the interwar period. LCpl Dodgson's family posted an annual 'In Memoriam' notice until 1950.⁴⁷ The family continued to post an 'In Memoriam' to his memory despite the death of his mother in the early 1940s, and his father in the mid-1940s.⁴⁸ Mr and Mrs Laing posted a small notice to their son who died 'in action on the Somme' nearly every year until 1941.⁴⁹ The wife and children of Pte Joseph Pratt posted 'In Memoriam' notices until 1943, when there was a year's silence, after which there was one more notice, this time from his sons and daughters only.⁵⁰ Pat Jalland found that the Bickersteth family posted an 'In Memoriam' to their brother, who was killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, yearly in *The Times* until 1976.⁵¹ A strong personal memory of the deceased was the key to these repeat postings. These men were commemorated year upon year in a quasi-public space, signalling that the family was still actively remembering him. With the exception of the Bickersteth's, this strong memory of the deceased was not necessarily transmitted to sons and daughters, who, when the primary carriers of personal memory of the deceased had died, did not continue with the tradition of posting a yearly 'In Memoriam' notice for a significant length of time.

For families who had lost someone in the First World War, the 'In Memoriam' column provided a separate point of public memorialisation, on the day that their loved one died, instead of on the set public day of remembrance on 11 November. For those whose loved ones had died in a disaster, it is likely that communities grouped together on the anniversary of mining deaths to console one another. Unless in a local battalion, those who had lost people in the First World War, were unlikely to have a communal day when their loved ones perished en masse and so offered a set day of public memorialisation. By publishing the date of death

⁴⁶ He regularly posted in the *Durham Chronicle* at the end of March every year until at least 1930. The copies of the *Durham Chronicle* between 1930–1935 have been destroyed. He did not post again after 1935.

⁴⁷ Last post appears in the *Durham Chronicle & Chester-le-Street Chronicle*, 31 March 1950, p. 2.

⁴⁸ The last mention of LCpl's mother was 24 March 1939, and his father 23 March 1945.

⁴⁹ *Durham Chronicle & Seaham Weekly*, 29 August 1941, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Durham Chronicle & Chester-le-Street Chronicle*, 9 February 1945, p. 2.

⁵¹ Pat Jalland, *Death in War and Peace* (Oxford, 2010), p. 81.

in a public space, families connected to a wider web of remembrance. In so doing, they asked those who read the newspaper to acknowledge their suffering on the day of their loved one's death. This private grief was briefly projected onto the outside world and formed a point of memory which was different to local and national memorial initiatives.

A strong communicative memory of the man who died was perhaps key to the 'In Memoriam' notice. Once the immediacy of grief had abated, and the first few anniversaries of the death had passed, the need to publicly announce renewed remembrance waned. Those who had perished in the First World War were far more likely to have repeat 'In Memoriam' notices posted about them; this may have been as a result of economic realities, but it may have also been indicative of a wider memorial trend. By repeatedly posting in the newspaper, at least for a few years, families ensured that their patriotism and sacrifice was recognised. The columns were also a space for those other than the immediate family to offer their memories of the deceased and cement the dead's importance to them in a public space.

A further way to mark the death of a loved one was to print their image in the newspaper, so that others could clearly recognise who had been lost. By giving their loved one a marker, both of their individual date of death and a remembrance of what they looked like, a personalised memorial could be created. By projecting this through the newspaper, families attempted to spread their personal memories of the deceased into a wider public sphere. John Taylor, in his work on wartime photography, notes that the First World War saw a shift in the ways in which families and photography in the press worked. Previously it was only traumatic photographs that entered into the newspaper; however, as Taylor argues, the 'supreme sacrifice' of soldiers during the First World War fashioned 'a new precept of normality' through the publication of patriotic family photographs.⁵² As a precursor to this, family images of the deceased appeared after mining disasters. A large proportion of families would have had one photograph of their various family members in their homes, either individually or in a group image. These were placed in newspapers, and in commemorative pamphlets, so the family could receive comfort in the idea that their loved one was being remembered by others, and as a way of marking them as special among the other deaths which were occurring simultaneously.

A key question is how the photographs came to be in the newspaper. Journalists were keen to have compelling images and it can be hard to tell whether they were given freely by the bereaved or coerced into giving an image to reporters. Journalists regularly visited the homes of the bereaved in the aftermath of mining disasters. A reasonably typical description of these visits was that; 'our [the newspaper's] representative witnessed some terribly

⁵² John Taylor, *War Photography: realism in the press* (London, 1991), p. 30.

distressing scenes.⁵³ One journalist went into more detail, and reported that he knocked at a door, which was then:

Answered by a homely-looking woman, who invited me into the kitchen, where there were four women, including one wearing a white bandage around her head. It was no difficult matter to distinguish the widow. She was a slightly built person; her blanched, pallid face, clearly indicated the effect of the terrible shock she had been called upon to undergo. She was overcome with grief, and threw her hands into the air and wept aloud. Suddenly she ceased. A kind neighbour was tenderly nursing her young child, meanwhile looking piteously at the bereaved and comfortless widow. Just as I was turning to leave, thoroughly overwhelmed by the awful scene, the bereaved one gave a low, frightened, shudder, turned to the corner of the room, and gazed passionately at a portrait for a few moments. Then she sank into a chair, and burst into tears anew.⁵⁴

This piece of journalism reveals three important points; first that journalists entered into the homes of the bereaved after disasters; secondly, the personal reaction of the widow; and thirdly, that there were ‘portraits’, most likely a photograph, hanging in people’s houses which, even immediately after the disaster, became focal points of family grief. The quotation also indicates that journalists had access to family homes and, by extension, the possibility of seeing and reproducing family photographs begins to emerge.

These photographs, displayed within homes, were the basis of the photographs which appeared in newspapers. The family of Charles Todd, a soldier who died in the First World War, owns both a photograph of him which was used within the home as a point of memorialisation and a newspaper clipping in which the photograph features. [See Fig. 20].⁵⁵ The photograph reproduced in the newspaper has been slightly altered; the image has been tilted and extended. The right-hand side of the image, near Todd’s ear, has been inexpertly rendered and a slight curvature to the neck can be identified by the poor reproductive method used.

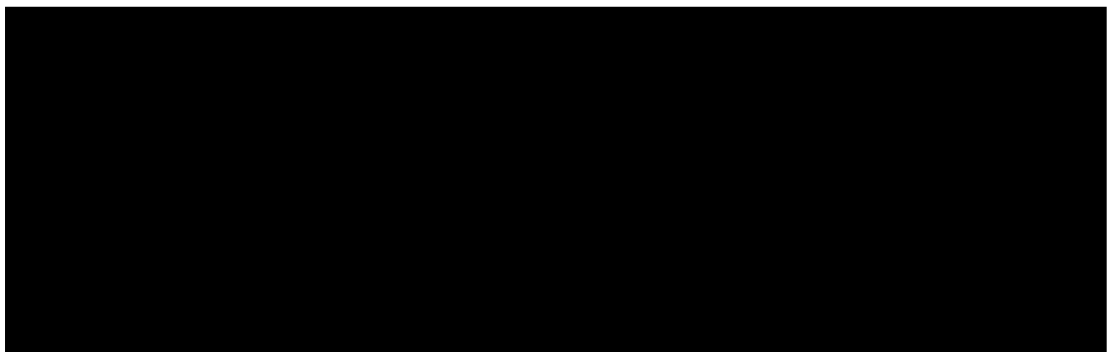


Fig. 20. Photograph and newspaper reproduction of Charles Todd.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Durham Chronicle*, 26 February 1909, p. 4.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Interview with Beverly Towers, 7 March 2016.

⁵⁶ Thanks to Beverly Towers, who allowed these images to be shared.

These photographic reproductions occurred after both the First World War and mining disasters. The processes for reproduction seemed to vary based on the type of photograph the family had of the deceased. Large group portraits would have been more difficult to reproduce than a small individual portrait, such as the portrait of Charles Todd. During the First World War, people were more likely to have smaller copies of individual portraits. These small photographs are most likely to have been the ones sent to the newspapers to reproduce. No record of quite how this was done has survived: as photographic processes changed so quickly during the early twentieth century it is likely that several methods were used.⁵⁷ In some cases, images taken from a group photograph seem to have been reproduced, then the space around the individual the printer wanted to recreate was whited out and this altered photograph was reproduced [See Fig. 21].

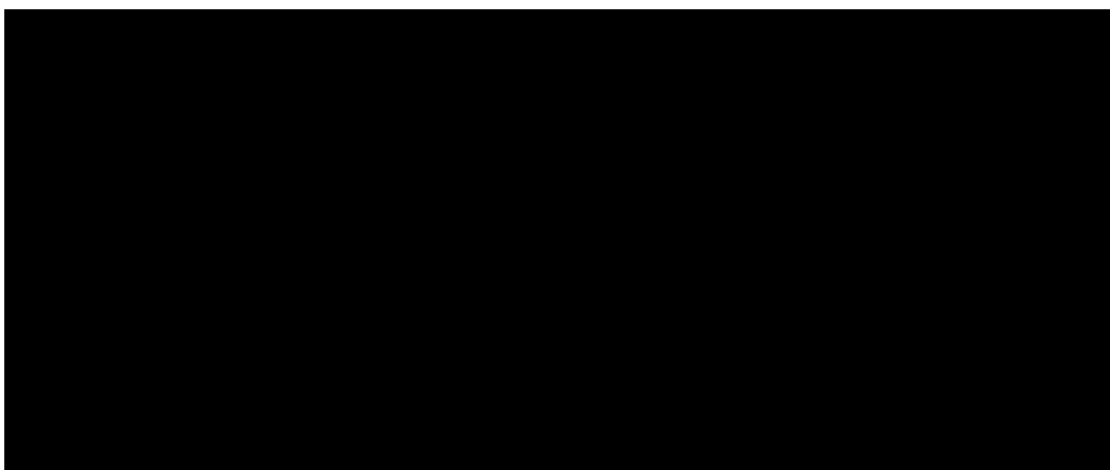


Fig. 21. Reproduction method used to transfer photographs of men in groups.⁵⁸

These images were also reproduced in commemorative pamphlets after disaster, such as the West Stanley disaster (1909) and the Wellington Pit disaster (1910). Images of the deceased assumed a particular importance after the Wellington Pit disaster, because the bodies of the men who died were never recovered. The lack of a funeral, although memorial services were held, dictated that any reminder of the corporeality of the dead, developed a heightened importance because of this. For families, these memorial pamphlets constituted a highly personal print memorial, and for the public, they enhanced the empathetic response triggered by viewing images of the dead. Usually, the memorial pamphlets included poems, a small description of the disaster, excerpts from local newspapers, and a gallery of photographs of the deceased. They were printed by local newspaper companies and recycled news stories

⁵⁷ This seems to be the conclusion that the various photographic historians, designers, and print technicians who specialise in historic print transfer techniques I have discussed this with have come to. Also see Michael Griffin, 'The Great War Photographs: Constructing Myths of History and Photojournalism', in Bonnie Brennen & Hanno Hardt (eds.), *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography* (Chicago, 1999), pp. 148-149.

⁵⁸ Harry Taylor, private collection.

from the newspapers they were produced by were printed within their pages. A wide variety of photographs were included: of the disaster, of the aftermath, and of the deceased men. Some have clearly been taken from larger group portraits whereas others are from individual cabinet photographs. Some of the photographs included were of pit boys taken when they were substantially younger, and the images are generally grouped by the age the man appeared when it was taken. Not every family donated a photograph to these publications, indeed, it is not certain that every family had a photograph to use, but there were generally enough photographs to fill several pages at the rear of each memorial booklet. The commemorative pamphlet genre of disaster ephemera seemingly tailed out during the First World War. In the interwar period they may have been seen as too reminiscent of newspapers carrying images of dead soldiers and so fell out of favour. The reproduction of family images was more immediate than memorialisation through a local war memorial, and were more personal than an 'In Memoriam' notice, although these memorial types often existed side by side. These memorial forms served different purposes: the 'In Memoriam' column could be used by several family members, and commemorate friends, sweethearts, and those who had died previously in the same posting. Memorial pamphlets were not as personal, only the image of the deceased appeared and there was no space for families to provide a memorial notice within their pages.

The local newspaper was key to the transmission of memory from the private sphere into the public realm. People used the newspaper to announce their bereavement and thank friends who had helped them in their immediate grief. Although the 'Deaths' column was the most heavily used by the families of those who died in an accident, the 'In Memoriam' column was used heavily in the wake of the First World War. The 'In Memoriam' column proved invaluable to some families, who posted year upon year until the memorial messages tailed off upon their death, when the remaining family members did not feel the need to continue. The norm was for a grieving parent or wife to submit a notice, but webs of family and friends begin to emerge. Sweethearts used the newspaper as a way of marking their special relationship with the deceased, and friends used it as a way of publicly marking their grief. Postings did not always follow a strict sense of time: multiple members of the same family, despite dying at different times, were commemorated in the same column, and those who announced that their missing were now presumed dead did not always do so on a logical anniversary. This personalisation of the memorial form was key to the newspaper's success as a tool for remembrance. Loved ones could choose verses, or nicknames for the deceased, and upon occasion even provide a photograph which would be reproduced. This connection between family and press allowed for an expression of grief which was to an extent individual and reflective of the family member they had lost. Through the local newspaper, a family

could convey if they were religiously hopeful, or still in shock from the sudden death the family had suffered. Those who read the newspaper silently acknowledged the suffering of others, leading the family to believe that they were connected to a web of wider mourning.

Newspapers were highly significant items in the memorialisation process. They were used when people had died after an illness, or old age, but war and disaster deaths were specially mentioned. As with other forms the mode of death was significant and was felt, by those placing the notices, to be worth mentioning. The 'Death' and 'In Memoriam' columns fulfilled a semi-performative role which indicated the loss of a loved one to the wider world. These notifications were reasonably commonplace and were a feature of local newspapers throughout the early twentieth century. Batten noted the importance of the 'In Memoriam' column in the First World War when no body could be found and therefore no IWGC headstone could be erected; however, these columns were equally popular following mining disasters, and in cases where some bodies were found, suggesting that while this form of memorialisation may have had an increased resonance for those with no headstone to mourn it was by no means utilised by them alone. The function of the columns was to memorialise the dead in a quasi-public place where memorial notices could be customised with a certain set of words or with an image. They were a way through which families could communicate with the outside world, and leave a personalised memento of their affection through print media as a signifier of loss to the outside world.

The local newspaper became a repository for personal memory mediated through social conventions in the public sphere. The local press was not inactive in this relationship and reporters visited the houses of grieving relatives, soliciting both news and photographs from family and friends. This dialogue between bereaved and representatives of the press resulted in a kind of *milieu de memoire* in which the family's grief was briefly projected onto the outside world through print ephemera. These personal forms of newspaper-based memorial ephemera were circulating within a wider culture of print ephemera. The newspaper was but one aspect of a large output of ephemera in the wake of war and disaster. The following chapters focus on these large-scale productions of items of ephemera. They explore the mass production of memorial ephemera by bodies other than the bereaved families: companies, charitable bodies, and printers themselves. These forms of charitable and commercial memorial printing used some of the same tropes of memorialisation as the families themselves had: images of the dead were used, and common memorial verses featured heavily. Yet, these were produced as mass memorial pieces to all of those who died so represent a different type of memorial ephemera to the individualised items already seen. Families were still involved with these types of memorial: their photographs were used in commercially printed items, they received the money from their sale, and producers of this printed material

occupied local spaces. Families would have found it difficult not to interact with this mass memorial ephemera in some way within their public lives, and at times these public forms of ephemera bled into the personal. The forms of memorialisation used by the family, and the ways in which they had agency over the construction and dissemination of this material, was at odds with the mass memorial ephemera which formed a key part of the aftermath of war and disaster in the first four decades of the twentieth century.

Chapter 6

Empathetic Ephemera

In 1909, the Durham Amateur Dramatic Society staged *The Maid of the Mill* at a theatre in Durham. The star of the show was a pit pony who was led onto the stage by a young miner.¹ Only a few weeks earlier the pit pony had escaped one of the worst mining disasters that the country had ever witnessed, and people flocked to the theatre to see this lucky animal. The crowds were reticent at first; a white pit pony had been photographed as emerging alive from the pit, and this one did not have a pearly glow about it, but this was soon explained away by the owner claiming that the white pony had been posed for the photograph, but this was the real one, and so the crowds warmed up.² The popularity of the pit pony lay in it bringing something singular to the event: celebrity. The newspaper reported that ‘everything, with the exception of the royalties on the play, was [provided] free’ to the organisers so that the funds raised from this event and donated to the West Stanley disaster fund were pure profit from the performance.³ Empathetic responses to war and disaster mostly focused on collecting money for the widows and orphans of the dead men. This could be through concerts, collections, or printed ephemeral items, such as ballad sheets, postcards, and memorial booklets. These could tend towards the sensational; one such charity box was created in the wake of the Bilsthorpe colliery disaster in 1934 and was, rather morbidly, built in the shape of a coffin.⁴ These items were produced by friends, workplaces, and by those who had no relationship with the deceased men. Religious ephemera, which was mass produced and could be customised, by the SPCK and other religious organisations, also fell under the umbrella of empathetically created, mass produced, ephemera. The purchase of this empathetic ephemera was part of a rich associational culture of aiding the needy after disaster. Although this chapter largely focuses on the physical and ephemera-based responses, a discussion of the ways in which people raised money for the bereaved helps to contextualise the charitable world these ephemeral items were being sold in. This is highlighted through a brief case study of people from Barry Island, South Wales, and their attempts to raise money in the wake of the Senghenydd and Gresford disasters, in 1913 and 1934 respectively. This chapter continues with an exploration of ephemeral items produced by the companies of the deceased men in order to comfort their families, followed by a discussion of items produced by close friends and sold in order to

¹ *Durham County Advertiser*, 26 March 1909, p. 7.

² One of the speakers made clear that a white pony had been photographed, and these images printed in the newspaper, but that no white pony had ever been saved.

³ *Durham County Advertiser*, 26 March 1909, p. 7.

⁴ NCMM, YKSMM: 1996.140.

provide some form of physical comfort for the family, before addressing ephemera produced by printers for religious purposes which was sold to produce money for the widows and orphans funds.

These empathetic and charitable responses were part of the philanthropic mania which characterised the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Frank Prochaska's seminal *The Voluntary Impulse* explained, philanthropy gained credence in the first half of the nineteenth century, becoming immensely popular in the latter half of the century.⁵ Peter Grant argues that instead of declining after its Victorian popularity, philanthropy thrived during the First World War. Indeed, he argues that the war provided a new impetus for voluntarism based upon the principle of mutual aid, while the charitable sector became increasingly professionalised as a response to the enormous amount of aid required.⁶ This First World War rush to give charitably rested upon a sixty-year tradition of heightened charitable giving in wartime. The Crimean War created the watershed that linked nations with charitable causes.⁷ Traditional forms of charity fundraising remained throughout the period, such as dinners and balls, but the nineteenth century saw the invention of several new ways of raising funds, from bazaars, to collection cards and charity boxes.⁸ The Second Anglo-Boer War continued this trend for the ephemeral, with street ballads being particularly popular as a form of charity during this period.⁹ The most well-known of these ballads was Kipling's *The Absent Minded Beggar*. It was commissioned by Alfred Harmsworth as part of the *Daily Mail* collection fund, set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan, and proved to be astronomically popular, motivating people to donate to the 'Absent Minded Beggar Relief Corps', which consequently raised £250,000.¹⁰

The popularity of charitable giving as a phenomenon did not mean that families of those who had lost someone in a disaster or war were in a particularly privileged financial position. John Benson notes that after a pit disaster, even with philanthropic giving involved, the families of the dead men were often still worse off for their loss and the colliery disaster funds 'proved inadequate to meet the needs of the bereaved for whose benefit they were founded'.¹¹ After a pit disaster, many of the families were reliant upon the charitable public sector establishing colliery funds for long term relief, as opposed to the colliery owners who

⁵ Frank Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London, 1988), p. 41.

⁶ Peter Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War* (New York, 2014), p. 170.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁸ Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse*, pp. 60–61.

⁹ Andrew Thompson, 'Publicity, Philanthropy and Commemoration: British Society and the War', in David Omissi & Andrew S. Thompson (eds.), *The Impact of the South African War* (Basingstoke, 2002), p. 103.

¹⁰ Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action*, p. 8.

¹¹ John Benson, 'Colliery Disaster Funds, 1860–1897', *International Review of Social History* 19:1 (April, 1974), p. 73.

only tended to help in the short term, for example, through covering funeral expenses.¹² Although John Benson's work focuses on the nineteenth century, the lack of interest from coal bosses and the inadequacy of a given fund to cover living expenses was still largely true for the first four decades of the twentieth century. Following the Workmen's Compensation Act in 1897, all employers had to give compensation for an employee killed at work, although this limited amount still proved inadequate for the widows and orphans. This scant financial assistance also came at a cost. Catherine Welsby's work highlights the trouble that the widows of Senghenydd faced in obtaining, and continuing to obtain, the compensation they were allowed. There were moralistic conditions applied to the reception of funds, with the executive committee given overwhelming power in administering the fund to those who they felt were worthy of assistance, or whom they felt were undeserving, and there are cases of widows who gave birth to illegitimate children, or cohabited with an unmarried partner, who were cut off from financial assistance.¹³ Thus, despite the charitable offerings during the period, their effect on the family finances is questionable. Though largely more welcome than not, control over the relief fund, be it through a company or an independent charitable body, was still inherently problematic and those who had the greatest need were not always recognised as such.

The owners of the pits where the disasters occurred also needed to show their support for the families of the deceased. After 1897 there had to be some form of financial remuneration; a minimum of £150 per person killed, but the final sum offered to the next of kin was highly dependent on both the disaster in question and the owners of the pit.¹⁴ Often financial settlements in whatever form angered the community. After the Senghenydd disaster in 1913, the fines levied against those held responsible at inquest only amounted to £24, which as one newspaper noted, meant that the verdict valued miners' lives 'at 1s 1½d each', although the pit-owners' compensation meant that the miner's lives were actually worth about £172 15s 9d.¹⁵ Aside from financial recompense, which even when there was ample payment, often fell short of being a comfort to the bereaved, the owners of the pits attempted to show their solidarity with the community through actions.

The miners themselves provided both practical and financial aid. Yet, despite men in different pits levying some of their wages to support mining disaster funds, such as the workers

¹² John Benson, 'English Coal-Miners' Trade-Union Accident Funds, 1850–1900', *Economic History Review*, 28:3 (August, 1975), p. 402.

¹³ Catherine Welsby, "'Warning as to her future behaviour': The Lives of the Widows of the Senghenydd Mining Disaster of 1913", *Llafur* 6:4 (1995), pp. 97–98. These moral codes were also applied to widows claiming War Pensions following the First World War, see Angela Smith, *Discourses surrounding British widows of the First World War* (London, 2012).

¹⁴ Benson, 'Colliery Disaster Funds, 1860–1897', p. 73; Welsby, "'Warning as to her future behaviour'", p. 95.

¹⁵ John H. Brown, *The Valley of the Shadow* (Port Talbot, 2009), p. 141; Welsby, 'Warning as to her future behaviour', p. 95.

of the Urpeth 'S' Pit who paid 1s per man and 6d per boy for the Stanley Distress Fund, the Brancepeth 'C' Pit paying 1s per member, and 6d per every half member.¹⁶ It was stated that:

The men and boys employed at the Dean and Chapter Colliery have decided to make special levies towards the West Stanley Relief Fund. The sum so contributed will be apportioned to the widows' and orphans' fund and to the men who have been thrown out of employment through the closing of the colliery.¹⁷

Despite the attempts made to aid the widows, orphans, and surviving miners who were out of work because their pits had to be closed down, this alone was not enough to cover living costs.

Alongside these workplace-based charitable initiatives, the public also raised money for bereaved families and their charitable responses to disaster were swift, organised, and rested on a bedrock of community activity. The responses of Barry Island to two major Welsh mining disasters, the Senghenydd disaster in 1913, and the Gresford disaster in 1934, provides a glimpse into the associational culture of charitable collecting in the early twentieth century. After both disasters the organising committees of the Barry District Funds, led by the Urban District Council, decided to fundraise with a door-to-door collection and a charity concert. The economic depression of the 1930s did little to stifle this philanthropic tendency among the public. The localised periods of unemployment in the 1930s were catastrophic for the South Wales mining communities but nonetheless on average public, and private, donations to charities substantially increased during the interwar years.¹⁸ The two disasters occurred at the height of Barry's financial success and within the depths of a terrible economic depression in South Wales. However, as Prochaska writes 'in the familiarity of the community, whether rural or urban, benevolence was a moral obligation, if not a test of faith.'¹⁹ Once the fund was open, the residents of Barry rose to the occasion with aplomb on both instances, and organised two successful fundraising campaigns.

The door-to-door collections constituted a community effort. During the 1913 collection, the Boy Scouts delivered envelopes and collected the monetary contributions to the fund the following week.²⁰ The leaflet which accompanied the 1913 collection included a missive from Thomas Davies, a local businessman, Chairman of the Barry Urban District Council, and Chairman of the 1913 committee, explained:

I [Davies] feel sure that the Town of Barry, situate [sic] as it is in the same County as the bereaved district and linked with it being dependent upon the same trade, will

¹⁶ *Durham Chronicle*, 12 March 1909, p. 7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Bernard Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800–1945* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 187–189; Juliet Gardiner, "'Searching for the Gleam': Finding Solutions to the Political and Social Problems of 1930s Britain", *History Workshop Journal* 71 (Autumn, 2011) p. 104.

¹⁹ Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse*, p. 41.

²⁰ GA, BB/C/241. Leaflet, 22 October 1913.

desire to take its full share in the effort which is being made to relieve those who have been so suddenly plunged into sorrow and want.²¹

The 1913 house-to-house collection amounted to £83 19s 1d.²² The 1934 Disaster Committee created a similar house-to-house collection and raised £136 1s 1d for the fund.²³

Similarly, the performances involved as many community groups and organisations as possible. The 1913 concert featured a number of local groups, such as the ‘Pupils of “Highcroft” School’ and the ‘Gladstone Road Juvenile Choir’, as well as more established musicians such as Professor Tom Jones, ‘Triple Medallist, Diploma London Academy of Music, etc., etc.’²⁴ Tickets for the evening performance were sold by a number of various groups, including several branches of the Junior Conservative Club, the Liberal Club & Institute, the Royal Antediluvian Order of the Buffaloes (R.A.O.B) Club & Institute, the Boilermakers, and the Council Office itself, raising a grand total of £32 17s 5d from ticket sales.²⁵ The matinee performance sold nearly as well, producing a total of £27 15s 9d to be donated to the fund.²⁶ The account book of the 1934 committee shows that a total of £30 19s 6d was raised through ticket sales and a further £1 11d 5s was raised by the sale of programmes.²⁷ The concert itself featured The Virginia Minstrels, the Super Five Concert Party, and various other local celebrities such as ‘Master Ralph Jack, the Boy Wonder’.²⁸ The concert was aided by the local Boy Scouts’ Association who sold programmes, the R.A.O.B. who stewarded the event, and the St John’s Ambulance Brigade who were on hand in case of emergency.²⁹ A large number of different local groups were involved which both increased revenue and meant that a large proportion of the organisations in Barry were aiding the relief fund.

In addition to the performances the Barry Urban District Council Relief Funds asked local businesses and individuals for contributions to the collection. One man wrote to the fund, donating one guinea, explaining, ‘I know from family experience the terrible consequences of such a disaster for my father and a brother were involved in a colliery explosion. Fortunately they escaped with their lives, but suffered terribly from burns and injuries.’³⁰ However, these requests for contributions were in competition with others. It has been noted that in Victorian

²¹ GA, BB/C/241. Leaflet, 22 October 1913.

²² GA, BB/C/241. House to House Collection Accounts, 1913.

²³ GA, BB/C/8/55. House-to-House Collection.

²⁴ GA, BB/C/241. Barry Relief Fund Concert Programme.

²⁵ GA, BB/C/241. Accountancy Book, Concert and Theatre Royal (evening).

²⁶ GA, BB/C/241. Accountancy Book Matinee.

²⁷ GA, BB/C/8/55. Variety Concert Ticket Record.

²⁸ GA, BB/C/8/55. Programme of Variety Concert, 26 October 1934.

²⁹ GA, BB/C/8/55. Programme of Variety Concert, 26 October 1934; Letter from F.R. Hortop, 18 October 1934.

³⁰ GA, BB/C/8/55. Letter from D. J. Martin, 5 October 1934.

society that the number of charitable causes competed with each other for much the same audience.³¹ It seems that, by the early twentieth century, this had not changed. Sometimes this could be amicable and the file for the 1913 Barry Relief Fund contains letters from those offering the amounts raised by their independent fundraising initiatives to the larger fund. For example, the Honorary Secretary of the Parade Juvenile Dramatic Company gave details of a concert given at the Parish Hall ‘kindly lent by the Rector’ which raised £7, asking for the money to be put towards the fund and ‘an acknowledgement in the local paper.’³²

Despite the local fund subsuming smaller initiatives in the area, so too was it in turn subsumed by the larger Lord Mayor of Cardiff’s Fund. There was a definite tension between the local initiatives and the widespread Lord Mayor’s Fund. The Lord Mayor’s funds for large disasters were commonplace by the early 1900s and it was this that the majority of fund raising was eventually siphoned into.³³ In 1913, Councillor Davies quickly locates his fund within the milieu of other funds, stating in an open letter that ‘the Lord Mayor of Cardiff has opened a relief fund to which the King and Queen have contributed, and the Lord Mayor of London has made an appeal to the whole Country by opening a fund at the Mansion House’ before explaining, ‘I have opened a local fund to which I shall be glad to receive subscriptions addressed to the Council Offices, Barry.’³⁴ Many businesses donated money to the larger Lord Mayor of Cardiff’s fund and one such wrote to Councillor Davies in 1913, explaining that although they were in receipt of the circular letter asking for donations, ‘our Head Office in Cardiff will be subscribing towards the above fund, covering the whole of our business.’³⁵ One firm based in London directly stated their prior allegiance, explaining ‘we have already sent a donation to the fund which the Lord Mayor of Cardiff has opened so we must ask you to excuse us from contributing to the local fund.’³⁶ A letter from J. L. Frazer, of Frazer & Co. Ship Store Merchants, was somewhat blunt, stating ‘anything I do Re above, at present, unless I change my mind, I intend to do at Cardiff.’³⁷ Sometimes the requests from the Barry Urban District Council was simply too late. A letter from the Imperial Tobacco Company states that on the day the circular was sent, the newspapers had announced their ‘contribution of £1,000 to the Lord Mayor of Cardiff’s Fund for the relief of sufferers from the Senghenydd Disaster.’³⁸

³¹ Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse*, p. 69.

³² GA, BB/C/241. Letter to Mr Davies, No Date.

³³ Grant, *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action*, p. 8.

³⁴ GA, BB/C/241. Letter from Councillor Davies, 21 October 1913.

³⁵ GA, BB/C/241. Letter from John Shearman & Co. Ltd, 21 October 1913.

³⁶ GA, BB/C/241. Letter from J. & C. Colman Ltd., 22 October 1913.

³⁷ GA, BB/C/241. Letter from J. L. Frazer, 22 October 1913.

³⁸ GA, BB/C/241. Letter from The Imperial Tobacco Company, 23 October 1913.

As with other forms of charitable ephemera printing the printers who produced posters and programmes for the concerts did not always provide their services for free. Despite the committee resolving to ask the printers to produce tickets and posters free of charge, the Senghenydd Relief Fund spent £3 17s on envelopes, slips, and tickets, which were printed by the Barry Herald Co., ‘commercial stationers, advertising agents, printers, bookbinders, lithographers &c.’³⁹ The ‘Barry Dock News’ Printing & Publishing Works similarly supplied £4 5s worth of Senghenydd Relief Fund emblazoned ephemera.⁴⁰ However, they did print the programme for free, thus ensuring that any profit made from the sale of the programme went directly to the fund.⁴¹ Similarly, the 1934 Fund paid the *Barry Herald*, £1 1s for 2,000 tickets printed for the variety performance, the *Barry & District News* asked for £1 6s 6d to cover the cost of printing the programmes, the *Barry Advertiser* was given £1 for printing 5,000 leaflets advertising the concert.⁴² Committee meeting minutes clearly show their attempt to spread the printing work around the district, with independent printers E. J. & I. J. Llewellyn being asked to print the posters, for which they charged 17s 6d, and Brook & Williams being held in reserve for any other printing which came about.⁴³ The 1934 Disaster Committee commissioned 9,300 envelopes to be printed in total; 2,400 by E. J. & I. J. Llewellyn; 2,300 by the *Barry & District News*, 2,300 by Brook and Williams’ and 2,300 by the *Barry Herald*, who had printed ephemera for the fundraising committee in the wake of the Senghenydd disaster.⁴⁴ Including local printers in the fundraising attempts was commonplace and spreading the printing across several local firms ensured that all were equally involved.⁴⁵

Despite the tensions, especially in the place of the Barry Urban District Council Funds between smaller and larger collection initiatives, the inhabitants of Barry raised substantial amounts for the bereaved. In the wake of the Senghenydd Disaster the inhabitants of Barry Island raised £506 4s 2d.⁴⁶ Councillor Davies sent this money to the Lord Mayor of Cardiff’s Fund, receiving a letter of thanks in return from the Mayor which stated ‘[I] should like to express through you, to the inhabitants of Barry, my warm and sincere thanks for their

³⁹ GA, BB/C/241. Committee meeting minutes, 29 October 1913; Bill from Barry Herald Co., December 1913.

⁴⁰ GA, BB/C/241. Bill from ‘Barry Dock News’ Printing & Publishing Works, 11 December 1913.

⁴¹ GA, BB/C/241. Barry Relief Fund Concert Programme.

⁴² GA, BB/C/8/55. Bill from the *Barry Herald*, 29 October 1934; Bill from the *Barry & District News*, 24 October 1934; Bill from *Barry Advertiser*, 27 October 1934.

⁴³ GA, BB/C/8/55. Committee Meeting Minutes 12 October 1934.

⁴⁴ E. J. & I. J. Llewellyn charged 17s 6d; The *Barry & District News* charged 17s 6d; Brook & Williams charged 17d; and the *Barry Herald* charged 17s 6d. GA, BB/C/8/55. Bill from *Barry & District News*, 31 October 1934; Bill from E. J. & I. J. Llewellyn, October 1934; Bill from *Barry Herald*, October 1934; Bill from Brook & Williams, 24 October 1934.

⁴⁵ Gratuities were also disseminated: GA, BB/C/241. Receipt for 5s in gratuity for services rendered, December 1913; GA, BB/C/8/55. Petrol Costings; Receipt 16 November 1934; Receipt 26 October 1934; Concert Committee Meeting Minutes, 25 October 1934; Receipt 29 October 1934.

⁴⁶ GA, BB/C/241. Cheque to Lord Mayor of Cardiff, 12 December 1913.

kind and generous response to the appeal made on behalf of the sufferers of this sad and deplorable Colliery disaster', adding: 'May I also convey to you personally, my sincere thanks for the assistance you have rendered to the Fund by your local appeal.'⁴⁷ The collection for the 1934 Gresford disaster raised £431 15s 2d, which was sent to the *Western Mail* in early December, with a further £185 11s 7d being additionally sent.⁴⁸ The *Western Mail & Echo* was generous in its praise of the fund, saying that their reaction was 'typical of Barry... there never was a time when the Barry people turned a deaf ear to those in distress.'⁴⁹

The methods used by the Barry Islanders were perhaps slightly dated by the time of the disasters. Theatrical concerts to raise money for those in need rose to the height of popularity in the 1880s.⁵⁰ Sporting events, from football matches where collections were paraded around the spectators to larger organised sporting events, were also used to raise disaster money and were also common throughout the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, although interestingly do not feature in the Barry Islanders' fundraising efforts.⁵¹ As with the residents of Barry, so too in other places were efforts at charitable fundraisers sometimes held in an oversaturated market. In March 1909, a whist drive was organised in Durham to raise funds for the West Stanley disaster. A report of the event in the local newspaper reported that the attendance 'was not so large as was anticipated, but it must not be inferred that Durham is in any way behind other places in its sympathy with the bereaved families' explaining that Lent meant that churchgoers could not partake in frivolity, that inclement weather could be to blame, or simply that Durhamites were now out of favour with whist, it having been played so much.⁵²

Among this backdrop of a rich culture of providing money for the bereaved after sudden disaster, ephemera and charitable items were produced, and sold to aid these funds. These physical items were produced by companies who employed the men, colliery associations, and concerned members of the public. In addition to providing practically for those who had died in their employ, some companies attempted to soothe the families of their workers through the production of memorial material. In 1917, the Bowesfield Steel Company produced a photographic album of their workers who had gone to fight, and those who had lost their lives. The company explained that, initially, the album had been 'launched as a

⁴⁷ GA, BB/C/241. Letter to Councillor Thomas Davies, 13 December 1913.

⁴⁸ GA, BB/C/8/55. Letter from R. J. Webber, *Western Mail*, 5 December 1934.

⁴⁹ GA, BB/C/8/55. Letter from *Western Mail & Echo*, 31 October 1934.

⁵⁰ Catherine Hindson, "'Gratuitous Assistance'? The West End Theatre Industry, Late Victorian Charity, and Patterns of Theatrical Fundraising', *New Theatre Quarterly* 30:1 (2014), p. 21.

⁵¹ Joyce Kay & Wray Vamplew, 'Beyond Altruism: British football and charity, 1877–1914', *Soccer & Society* 11:3 (May, 2010), p. 181. Just one match after the West Stanley disaster (1909) between to local teams, West Stanley vs. Hebburn Argyle raised £1 19s 2d for the fund; *Durham Chronicle*, 5 March 1909, p. 11.

⁵² *Durham Chronicle*, 26 March 1909, p. 12.

commercial enterprise on behalf of the War Fund', with each copy intended to be sold for sixpence, but 'owing to the heavy costs of production and the limited public to whom it would appeal', that the money raised would instead support the families of the bereaved.⁵³ Within the first few pages there was an emotive passage printed about the company's purpose in producing the booklet, culminating in the exclamation that only practical help would be of use because 'these are no times for platitudes'.⁵⁴ Further into the booklet, the company included a small memorial passage, which featured portraits of the deceased and platitudes such as: 'we extend our deepest sympathy to the bereaved ones.'⁵⁵ Part war propaganda, part memorial item, this pamphlet of which 'every Soldier and Sailor from Bowesfield ... every relative and friend' should own a copy, acted as an official yet personalised memento for colleagues and relatives. By fusing general wartime statements with the individual, a pamphlet with as broad an appeal as possible was created. Through investing in items like this, the company created a sense of solidarity among the workers, their families, and in more official channels such as the firm's customers.

While the Bowesfield Steel Company's offering rapidly expanded to include the public in its remit, other companies produced items only for those who were intimately affected. After the 1938 Markham Colliery disaster, the Derbyshire Miners' Association published a book containing reproductions of the messages of sympathy received. The Derbyshire Association explained:

There have been so many messages of sympathy sent to to [sic] this Office, to be forwarded to the relative of the seventy-nine men who lost their loves [sic] in the above terrible disaster, that it was decided by the Council Meeting they should be put into booklet form and printed.⁵⁶

In total, the booklet contains 174 messages of condolence which were sent to the Derbyshire Miners' Association. It is highly probable that many more were received by the Staveley Coal and Iron Company's Offices, that owned the pit, thus giving a sense of scale as to the high number of condolences received.⁵⁷ The messages are varied; some are from individuals, others from other Mining Associations, and many from overseas bodies, such as the Federation Mineurs Francais and the Committee of the Free Trade Union Miners of Germany. Messages from Britain are as varied as a telegram from the Communist Party of Great Britain and one from the Sheffield Equalized District Order of Druids Friendly Society.

⁵³ Bowesfield Steel Company, *Souvenir Programme and Photographic Album of War Heroes and War Workers* (Stockton-on-Tees, [1917]), p. [33].

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. [6].

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. [26].

⁵⁶ Derbyshire Miners' Association, *Markham Colliery Disaster 10th May 1918: letters and telegrams of sympathy received by the Derbyshire Miners' Association* (Chesterfield, 1938), p. [1].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. [3].

Many of the telegrams describe the sender's feelings about the circumstances the families found themselves in. The South Wales Miners' Federation, for example, linked the tragedy to that of Senghenydd, experienced by the region over twenty years previously. The Secretary, Hubert Jenkins, wrote:

I am directed by the Council of Area 6 to convey to your members their sincere sympathy and condolence with the relatives and dependents of the victims of the Markham Colliery Disaster. It brings back the memories of Senghenydd and other disasters which have occurred in the past. We can visualise the scenes which you have been faced with and the sorrow which has been brought into so many homes. Will you kindly convey our message of sympathy to the dependents and also to the members of the Lodge connected with the Markham Colliery.⁵⁸

This solidarity of experience was also forwarded by women, who made a special mention of the wives of those killed when sending their telegrams. The Shepherd's Bush Women's Co-Operative Guild used the opportunity presented by their telegram to offer sympathy, in particular, to the wives, and pledged to help gather support. They wrote:

At the meeting to-day of the above Guild we felt we must send a word of sympathy to the wives and other relatives of the men killed in the Markham pit disaster. We can well imagine how they must be feeling and we pledge ourselves in every way to help swell demand for security for the miners and mining communities.⁵⁹

This linking of personal experience to the current circumstances threads different tragedies together. Communities understood other disasters through the experience of their own, offering consolation in the form of understanding, and the solidarity of mediated understandings of the emotional ramifications of the event.

The book of telegrams produced after the Markham Colliery disaster was unusual: the only other instance of a specially produced book being sent to families in the wake of a disaster were the personally engraved bibles which were sent to the families of the Oaks disaster victims in 1866. This Oaks Colliery disaster was one of the largest and most shocking to Victorian Britain and was, until the Senghenydd disaster in 1913, the worst that the United Kingdom had witnessed. Some of the remaining Oaks disaster Bibles can be found in the National Coal Mining Museum, such as the bible given to Tom Farmery, born 28 October 1861, in memory of his father and 359 others who died. This was turned into a family Bible, with lists of births, marriages, and deaths in the blank sheets at the final blank pages of the book.⁶⁰ The BBC 'A History of the World' initiative, which allowed members of the public to post their important objects, features an Oaks Bible, presented to the great-grandfather of the

⁵⁸ Derbyshire Miners' Association, *Markham Colliery Disaster*, p. [6].

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. [9].

⁶⁰ NCMM: YKSMM:2015.281.

contributor.⁶¹ This post suggests that this person, at least, still retains their Oaks Bible and views it as a family keepsake, and more may reside in family homes.

Companies with an indirect link to the victims also felt the need to prove their charitable ethos, and realised the advertising potential of charitable gestures under the circumstances. Eleven of the customers of the West Stanley branch of the Singer Sewing Machine Co. who had hired sewing machines under hire purchase agreements had perished or been a close relative of someone who had died in the explosion in 1909. Therefore, a few weeks after the accident, the local newspaper announced that ‘as a token of the sympathy with the relatives in their bereavement the Company have generously decided not to call upon those responsible for their further instalments, the balance totalling in all £60 2s 2d.’⁶² Similarly, after the Gresford disaster in 1934, a local haberdashery advertised through the *Wrexham Star* that they would give all of the bereaved a free silk scarf if they would visit the shop.⁶³ In doing so, these companies not only secured publicity but brand loyalty within their respective regions. Disasters could therefore present themselves as a marketing opportunity; undoubtedly the gesture was a generous one, but one that nonetheless increased feelings of goodwill towards the firm.

Official responses to war and disaster therefore differed based on the relationship between the giver and the receiver. Companies who had men fighting in the First World War turned their charitable ephemera to appeal to those who could give a donation to support the families of those who had been killed. Mining associations instead focused on providing a way for the families of the victims to read the messages of sympathy sent from public bodies with whom they would otherwise not interact. The owners of mines in which disasters occurred during the period needed to show empathy in public, although this often took the form of public gestures of sympathy than in financial remuneration. These varying roles attributed to the different groups disseminating charitable items start to hint at the complex nature of charitable giving during the period. Ostensibly it came from a basic desire to help victims of disaster, but uncovered here are the beginnings of a complex relationship between charitable initiatives, the public, and businesses.

Alongside ‘official’ responses to disaster, commercial printers would produce limited runs of charitable print ephemera to sell to the public. Different types of ephemera were common: poems, memorial booklets, song sheets, and lists of the dead. Broadside and ballads were also produced, often in aid of widows and orphans, thus creating a community web of

⁶¹ BBC “Oaks” Bible, available at, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/iz0pJi96S--VVAoYQWIEOA> (accessed October 2018).

⁶² *Durham Chronicle*, 5 March 1909, p. 11.

⁶³ Roger Laidlaw, ‘The Gresford Disaster in Popular Memory’, *Llafur* 6 (1995), p. 129.

remembrance which operated through ephemera. The majority of charitable disaster ephemera seems to have been produced in small print runs by local jobbing printers, whose work was mostly commercial, and ephemera based. These varied in cost, but were generally reasonably cheap, and sold for a penny or two; some were produced in a cruder fashion than others. A small, black rimmed memorial card produced for the victims of the West Stanley disaster is a particularly hastily produced item. The card was printed without finesse, with a poorly printed 'T Wood Durham 1909 Price one Penny in Aid of Fund' stamped on the reverse [See Fig. 22].

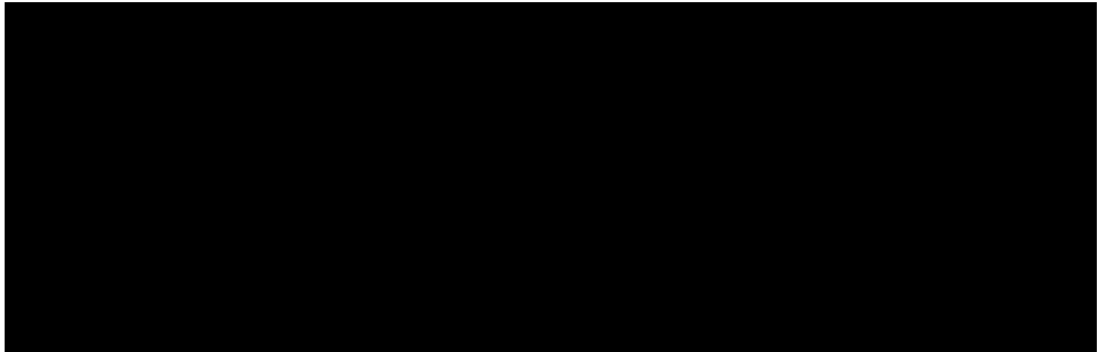


Fig. 22. Memorial card produced by T Wood.⁶⁴

Some writers liked to highlight their charitable nature and listed their credentials of fundraising money for a charitable cause on the items they were now selling to raise funds for a different disaster. In small print at the bottom of a poem written for the victims of the Rufford Colliery Disaster in 1913 the composer, John C. Brittain, reminded his clients that 'It will be remembered that Mr. Brittain was successful in getting together £36 for the Titanic Disaster.'⁶⁵ Indeed, the same Mr Brittain was responsible for a large poster commemorating the sinking of the Empress of Ireland in 1914, with small print at the foot of the poster stating 'Mr Brittain still has a few Copies of the Titanic, Rufford, and South Wales Poems, which may be had on Application.'⁶⁶ This advertising of pamphlets within pamphlets was common, and presumably utilised as it produced favourable results. The linking of an author to a charitable cause again increased the likelihood of sales. It is unclear whether the Rufford and Empress of Ireland pieces were sold for charity. If an item was being sold to raise money this was generally stated, and Brittain, by linking himself with his earlier charitable act, legitimised his current status as author and suggested his charitable status without necessarily adhering to it with the money raised from the sale of the Rufford poem.

⁶⁴ BM, 1995.82.

⁶⁵ NCMM, YKSMM: 2011.408.9.4.

⁶⁶ BL, 1865.c.4.(97).

As with earlier ballads being printed for wartime charities, so too the linking of celebrities with charitable giving was commonplace during the First World War. The death of Edith Cavell in 1915 was of particular interest to printers attempting to elicit a charitable response to their work. A memorial poem, titled ‘The Queen of the Ward’, was composed by Thomas Brocan and sold for 1d for the *Daily Mirror* Edith Cavell Memorial Fund, almost certainly in 1915.⁶⁷ Another pamphlet detailing her death donated ‘a goodly proportion of the proceeds from the sale’ of the song to the Canadian Red Cross and Canadian Patriotic Funds.⁶⁸ Mrs T. Clatworthy produced a poem ‘in aid of our Prisoners in Germany’.⁶⁹ Of course, not all poems were sold for charitable profit: E. H. Rowe of South Shields, in the North East of England, produced In Memoriam poems for both Edith Cavell and Lord Kitchener and sold them at a penny apiece.⁷⁰ His poem in remembrance of Cavell is particularly notable as it was composed two years after her death, on 21 October 1917, a couple of weeks after the commemoration of her death, although it is possible that there was a typographical error and the date of composition was in fact the twelfth of the month.⁷¹ These forms of charitable and commercial ephemera co-existed within the saturated market of mass memorial ephemera and were presented in largely similar ways.

Celebrity animals were also featured in printed ephemera. As in the case of the pit pony being paraded around in the wake of the West Stanley disaster, animals were often used to elicit money from a sympathetic public. This drew upon a rich tradition of animals being featured in both charity drives and in memorial ephemera. Victorian funeralia was produced for horses and domestic animals as well as for people.⁷² Sometimes, these charitable animals were so successful in their endeavours that they in turn received funerary ephemera printed about them after their death. The ‘Cheltenham Lady’, a dog owned by Sergeant G. W. Locker of the Royal Engineers, raised ‘over £50 (nearly 14,000 coins) for the Wives and Families of Soldiers who are fighting in South Africa’ [See Fig. 23].⁷³ This statement, alongside a specially written ‘In Memoriam’, several poems, a biography, account of her death, and a photograph of her were printed in funerary card form after her death during a ‘severe operation’ in 1901. Although it was not explicitly stated, it is likely that it was either produced for certain members of the Royal Engineers or produced on a slightly wider scale to be sold for the fund (as the war was still ongoing). Victorians, it seems, had a penchant for the noble dog which reached the height of pathos with Greyfriars Bobby. This sentiment could be turned

⁶⁷ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(61).

⁶⁸ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(35).

⁶⁹ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(91).

⁷⁰ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(78); (87).

⁷¹ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(78).

⁷² Maurice Rickards, *Collecting Printed Ephemera* (Oxford, 1988), p. 174

⁷³ JJCcol, Funerary Box 6. Funeral card for ‘The Cheltenham Lady’.

into a valuable marketing tool and the coffers of disaster funds swelled in reaction to these celebrity animals.

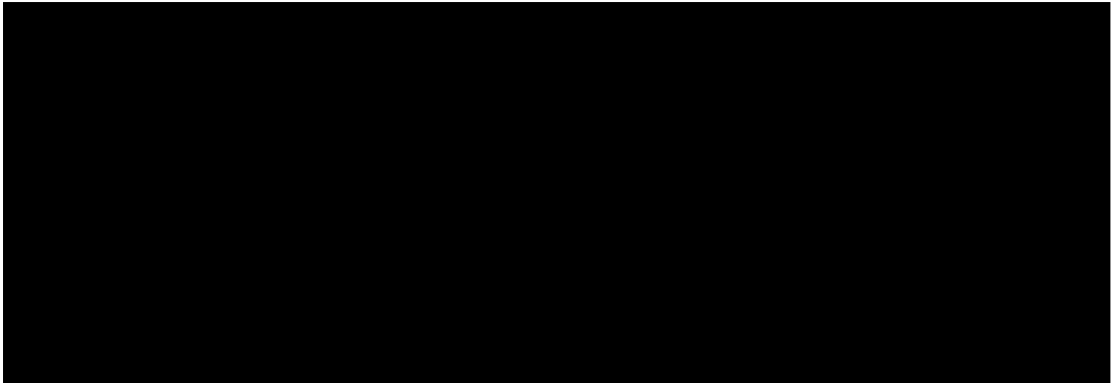


Fig. 23. Memorial card for 'The Cheltenham Lady'.⁷⁴

Ballad sheets in relation to disaster were slowly becoming unpopular by the 1930s, however a particularly emotive song-sheet 'Daddy, we'll meet some day', more reminiscent of Victorian ballads concerning poor matchstick girls than an event occurring decades in the future, was written and composed by Will Poles in remembrance of the Bentley Colliery Disaster in 1931, consisting of such verses as:

I think of you tho' far away,
Wishing you could hear me say,
I love you so,
You had to go
We'll meet again some day.⁷⁵

The song-sheet for the Bentley Disaster is unusual in that it includes sheet music. Usually, ballad sheets contained lyrics only as the words were set to a well-known tune, ensuring ease of access for members of the public to these pertinent verses, such as the memorial verses in memory of those who lost their lives in the Combs Pit in 1893, which was composed of melancholy lines like 'old men and boys lie in one grave'.⁷⁶ The lyrics were easy to understand, contained a simple narrative, and were popular because all that was required was to set new lyrics to a pre-existent tune.

One of the earliest instances of charitable ephemera printed after a mining disaster that has survived given the cheap paper ballads were usually printed on, is 'The Collier's Last Shift', dated approximately 1849. This sheet is about a mining disaster in Dudley Port. The print features a crude woodblock print and asked the viewer to 'Please to Purchase this Hymn of[f] some of the Colliers who have lost their limbs.'⁷⁷ Echoes of the injured seller can be

⁷⁴ JJCol, Funerary Box 6. Funeral card for 'The Cheltenham Lady'.

⁷⁵ NCMM, YKSMM: 2006.372.

⁷⁶ NCMM, YKSMM: 2015.106.

⁷⁷ NCMM, YKSMM: 2005.12.

found in the aftermath of the First World War, with the British Legion creating vacancies for disabled ex-servicemen to create silk remembrances of the conflict in the form of poppies.⁷⁸ Although rare, ephemeral items could be sold by the victims of the disaster in question, to supplement a poor income.

Some charitable ephemera producers defrayed printing costs by donating only a portion of their profits to charity. Ben Norton, a local poet, sent half of his profits from the sale of a poem relating to the Dewsbury Pit Disaster, and two thirds to a fund connected to the Hulton Pit Disaster, presumably to cover the cost of printing the poems.⁷⁹ This was also the case after the Wellington Pit disaster in 1910, where thirty per cent of the profits from the sale of the poem were sent to the national fund established in the aftermath of the accident.⁸⁰ Declaring this on the item in question was reasonably rare, yet other printers may well have subtracted printing costs before sending the remainder to the fund without printing such a declaration.

Some printers produced large items for a charitable purpose. After the West Stanley disaster in 1909, the *Consett Chronicle* produced the 'Consett Chronicle Art Memento'. The booklet was reasonably large and contained many images already produced in the *North Mail* newspaper, as well as a large number of portraits of the deceased. In the description of the disaster the Art Memento authors wrote that 'a Relief Fund was quickly organised for the sufferers and was handsomely responded to, and we on our part hope by the proceeds of this Memento to be enabled to add a substantial contribution to that worthy fund.'⁸¹ Writing about a similar booklet produced in the wake of the 1934 Gresford disaster, Roger Laidlaw notes; 'these brochures are perhaps the most frequently kept relics of disaster. They are to be found with family mementos, framed on pub walls and as laminated facsimiles presented in exhibitions ... they are perhaps the most touching and democratic of the memorials to the Gresford dead.'⁸² These memorial pamphlets, published by newspapers after the disasters, both provided a paper-based memorial form for the families to use within mourning practices but also helped to raise money for the families of the deceased through their sale.

Ballads, broadsides, poems, and other items were all sold to swell the coffers of disaster funds; however, people also sold religious ephemera and physical objects for charity. Religious ephemera, which was mass produced and could be customised is worth briefly exploring in the context of empathetically made mass produced ephemera. The SPCK

⁷⁸ Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory* (London, 1994), p. 54.

⁷⁹ NCMM, YKSMM: 2004.2853.

⁸⁰ WA, No Accession Number, 'The Whitehaven Pit Disaster'.

⁸¹ Eleanor Neasham, 'Consett Chronicle Art Memento' (Consett, 1909), p. 6.

⁸² Laidlaw, 'The Gresford Disaster', p. 129.

produced customisable ephemera for families to enter the details of their loved one. The sheets featured pertinent biblical verses and a prayer.⁸³ One of these sheets, produced by an unknown printer, featured a print of Jesus standing over a fallen soldier on the battlefield and a memorial poem.⁸⁴ Again, this rested among a bedrock of special services, war vespers, and special prayers in Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish congregations.⁸⁵ Larger items of memorial material, such as richly decorated posters which displayed details of the war dead, were also produced, such as the 'Empire's Home Scroll of Honour' which featured heavily Christian motifs.⁸⁶ The SPCK produced highly decorative posters, presumably intended to be framed, with the image of St George and the dragon and the words 'Thine O Lord is the Greatness and the Power and the Glory and the Victory' [See Fig. 24]. Remarkably little of this overtly religious ephemera seems to have survived. Whether this was due to unpopularity, or small print runs, is unclear. Possibly, this material was more valued by families but the only examples of it found have been in the British Library, which is unusual for popular forms of ephemera, suggesting that for some unknown reason these items have not been accessioned into archives in the same way as other printed memorial material.

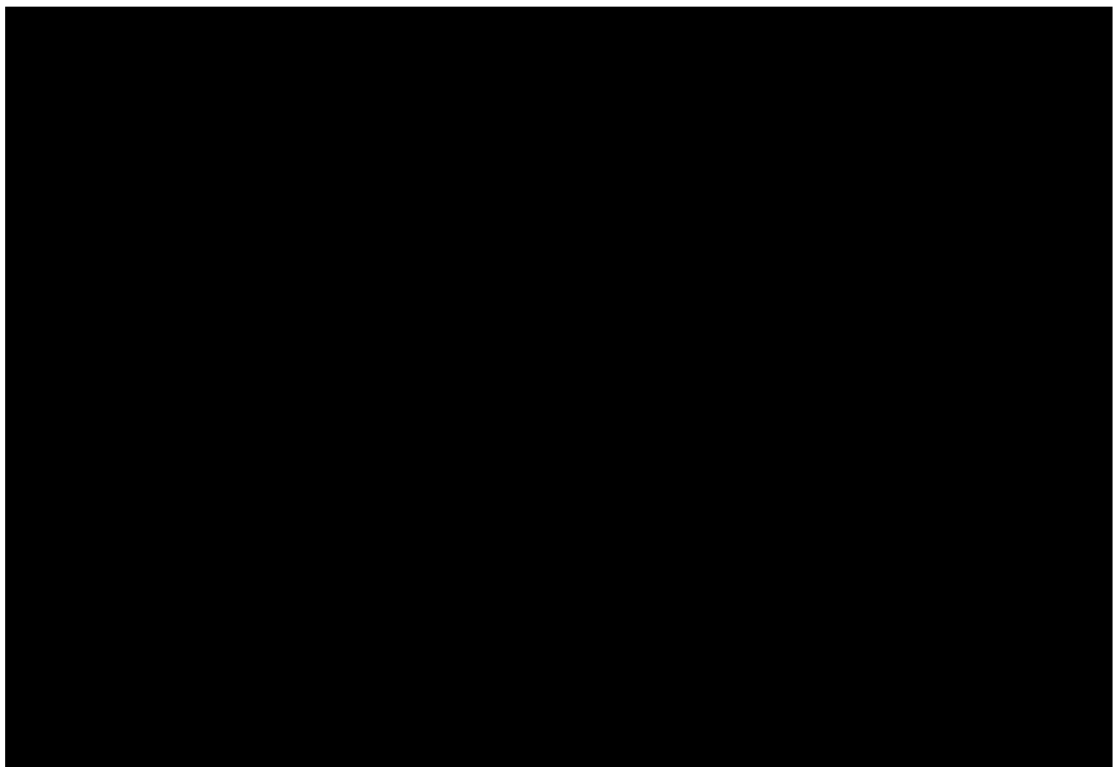


Fig 24. Memorial Scroll produced by the SPCK.⁸⁷

⁸³ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(16).

⁸⁴ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(9).

⁸⁵ For a collection of these see BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.

⁸⁶ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(140).

⁸⁷ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(148).

Empathetic objects were also produced; most notably: disaster glasses. Museum catalogues describe these engraved glasses as charitable items, decorated by friends of the deceased and sold for the widows and orphans fund, but it is unclear whether this was always their origin.⁸⁸ William Cowen, a pathologist and disaster glass enthusiast, alongside his friend and fellow-enthusiast John Brooks, an antique glass dealer, were the experts on disaster glasses and spent decades producing a database of all known examples found in collections throughout the country.⁸⁹ They were popular from the 1860s and remained so until the First World War.⁹⁰ They were often small, everyday, glasses taken from someone's house, engraved by a copper wheel driven by a foot treadle, and sold either for pennies or were given away for free.⁹¹ Disaster glasses as a descriptor is a misnomer, they were not always produced in relation to a disaster, and as with other types of popular ephemera glasses commemorating national events as well as personal events, such as a birthday, were not uncommon.⁹² Disaster glasses produced after disasters have an unclear function, some were likely sold to raise money for the affected families, but others perhaps produced as a commemorative item for the families to keep.⁹³ Sometimes the items were kept by the families of those who had a different sort of family connection to the disaster; for example, Cowen encountered a man who had a collection of glasses given to his grandfather as a gift for his participation in rescue brigades.⁹⁴

Although rare, painted plates were also sometimes produced after disasters. There are a handful of memorial plates produced after the Senghenydd disaster. These were crudely painted and often dedicated to individuals who died in the disaster, suggesting that they were painted specially for individual families.⁹⁵ These followed an earlier, more elaborate, form of memorial plate. After the Swaithe Main Colliery disaster in 1875, an intricately decorated memorial plate was created with the names of all who died painted upon it. In the centre of the plate there is an ornate sarcophagus, flanked by angels in a typical Victorian funeral motif.⁹⁶ It is unclear whether these memorial plates were painted for the families and given

⁸⁸ For examples of memorial glasses see: Beamish Museum 'Recorded in Glass', available at, <http://beamishtransportonline.co.uk/downloads/miscellaneous-downloads/disaster-recorded-in-glass/> (accessed September 2017). These claims have also been perpetuated by more general sites, such as the BBC and an historical site maintained by the Durham and Northumberland County Councils: available at, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/objects/FolxrML0QBin9L5SOty8zw> (accessed September 2017); <http://www.pastperfect.org.uk/sites/woodhorn/archive/1441.html> (accessed September 2017).

⁸⁹ Before his death Dr Cowen deposited his research with Beamish Museum. It is now publicly accessible.

⁹⁰ William Cowen, 'Look Back in Wonder: Disaster Glasses Revisited' (online, 2013), p. 4.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 5.

⁹² John Brooks & William Cowen, *An Alarming Accident: Or Every Glass Tells a Story* (Newcastle, 2008), p. 7.

⁹³ There are anecdotal accounts of disaster glasses being sold in pubs to raise money for disaster funds.

⁹⁴ Cowen, 'Look Back in Wonder', p. 6.

⁹⁵ The Aber Valley Heritage Centre have a number of these on display.

⁹⁶ NCMM, YKSMM: 1992.140 .

freely, or were sold to raise money for disaster funds. It seems likely that the Senghenydd plates, memorialising victims of the disaster, were produced cheaply due to their cruder nature, and they seem to have been produced as individual family mementos, but the extent of the charitable intent, and indeed use in the home, remains unknown.

The examples of both the plates and the disaster glasses highlight the ambiguous nature of much of the memorial material produced during the period. Unless explicitly stated on the item itself, it should be assumed that it was sold for profit, as much of the material was. Empathetic ephemera in the early twentieth century occupied a liminal space. Some pieces were sold as part of the larger interest in charitable giving which was popular during the period and raised money for different charitable funds. Other pieces were produced by friends for the bereaved families and these mementos presumably became part of the material of family memorialisation. The companies who had employed the dead men were also involved in producing suitable ephemera to disseminate to their families, although this was rare. Other related companies, such as the Singer Sewing Machine Company, also attempted to aid the bereaved in whatever capacity they could. Some of these acts were, of course, performative: companies wanted their customers to know that they were charitable employers. However, from some of the letters sent to the Barry Urban District Relief Fund, it seems that genuine sympathy was felt for the bereaved. Yet, as the Relief Fund books showed, not everything for a charitable cause was printed for free and the final chapter explores the commercial side of printed ephemera. Far from being only charitable ephemera that was printed, opportunities for commercial gain were high, and printers utilised disasters to spread news and to create mementos for families and the public. Families contributed to this ephemera, or were at least featured in it: the names of the deceased, addresses, and ages could all be included. It is in these items where family agency over the ways in which a loved one was memorialised began to loosen. Despite their loved one being the focus of the object, they were not allowed to augment it, although they benefitted from its sale.

Chapter 7

Mass Ephemera and the Construction of Remembrance

The feelings of loss of agency, which could begin when family was featured on, and were the recipients of profit from, charitable ephemera, had the potential to deepen when commercial ephemera used family images and information to sell commemorative items. This chapter focuses on the mass ephemera which was circulated in the wake of war and disaster in the early twentieth century. Memorial ephemera, although labelled as ephemeral material, was nonetheless designed to be kept for some length of time. Mass memorial ephemera was a ubiquitous part of public life and was sometimes seen in poor taste by the public; but it was nonetheless an understanding of the cultures of memorialisation which the families were exposed to, and the ways that local communities engaged in memorial practices is important if the family milieu of mourning in the early twentieth century is to be fully conceptualised. These types of popular memorial material were produced by commercial printers throughout the period and were sold for profit in newsstands and by street hawkers who would sell it at large gatherings, such as public funerals. These items used new technologies, created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to rapidly produce novel print items. The transfer of photographs of events onto postcards through the use of halftone printing, created in the 1890s, later allowed the reproduction of images in newspapers. Similarly, the import of different types of paper, such as German postcards and Japanese paper for souvenir napkins, added novelty value to these commemorative items. These new techniques meant that cheap, up to date, ephemera could be produced rapidly in response to any disaster read about in the newspaper. Mass manufacturing allowed blank card stock to be purchased and then individual printers customised this in response to significant events. Mass memorial material occupied a complex position within early twentieth century society: it was highly public, could be of a highly personal subject matter, and was sold for a profit by printing companies who capitalised on disaster. The material was a ubiquitous part of memorialisation after disasters but if attention was called to it, as in the case of the hawker shouting at one of the funerals, the public disapproved of its sale. This suggests that there was an etiquette to buying and selling this type of memorial material. It was undoubtedly highly popular: the production of mass memorial material existed well into the interwar period but by the 1930s was seemingly decreasing in popularity. These flimsy pieces of paper, often poorly printed, helped to shape the mass remembrance of war and disaster, had the potential to aid family remembrance, and to far outlive their intended temporary role.

This chapter addresses the various types of mass ephemera produced in order to offer a glimpse into both the myriad ways of producing commemorative paper ephemera and the different uses of these different types of item. It will first examine the role of postcards and their success in the early twentieth century, before moving on to mass memorial cards, broadsheets, and memorial napkins. The chapter then turns to slightly more specific forms of ephemera and the place of the 'family roll of honour' which demanded the family engage with a standard piece of ephemera by writing their personal details upon it. The types of ephemera examined all hint at the rich forms of ephemera which have ambiguous uses: they were at once inherently personal but also public pieces of paper which are difficult to categorise, but which illustrate a rich commemorative landscape.

These mass memorial items produced present a paradox: they are both commercial and commemorative. The production of ephemera can be seen as printers cashing in on the memorial mania present during the period as well as providing a memento of the tragic event for a concerned public to use as a keepsake. These ephemeral items had highly transmutable meanings: in some cases they acted as a source for images of a disaster which were not always published in the press, in others they could act as memorial material; in yet others, they were a vehicle for amateur poets to test the popularity of their verse. Significantly, this is the material which many representations of disaster, in particular, are now based upon. The surviving images of widows waiting at the pit head, forlorn children, and mass funerals are almost exclusively those recreated on postcards. The poor halftone print used in the newspapers meant that these alternate crisp, clear, images of disasters, which have been preserved in the mass produced postcard form, are now often used when illustrating these past events.

Memorial ephemera has ensured that the names of those who died in mining disasters are encapsulated in a single, non-newspaper, form. It was a rare minority of mining disasters that received a stone memorial: in mass memorial cards the names of the dead were collected as one. The stone memorial of the First World War was contrasted with the paper version produced after industrial accidents. Families of mining victims did not necessarily have the funds to erect a memorial themselves, and no external funds were raised for the erection of a stone memorial. The need for a physical marker in wartime, to commemorate the sacrifice of the soldiers, and which affected most towns within Britain and the varying class of people within them was great. Lacking these permanent memorials, mass ephemeral lists served as a significant place to commemorate the dead in a quasi-public space. Due to the mass manufacture of these items they could be shared, and individual memorials commemorating all the disaster dead were created. Yet, these memorial forms also helped the families of those who died in wartime. During the First World War itself, memorial ephemera was largely

produced by families, with a few rare examples, yet, afterwards, postcard manufacturers provided scenes of the IWGC cemeteries and local war memorials for families and friends of the soldiers who did not return. This allowed them to visualise the spaces in which their loved ones were buried, especially if they could not afford to take a pilgrimage to the gravesite. These different forms of mass memorial ephemera reflect the different tempos of the two types of death, war and mining, and the needs of the families: people died intermittently during wartime, whereas all deaths resulting from a disaster could be pinned to one day. Families who lost a loved one during the First World War already had objects to remind them of the dead soldier individually, and stone memorials were erected to facilitate community grieving. The families of those who had lost someone in a mining disaster often had a site to visit but no personalised ephemera to remember their loved one by, or place where the names of the dead were produced. As we have seen, the images of the dead and personal memorial cards were important to all families; here, the public-facing aspects of family grief are addressed to understand what type of mass memorial material was being provided and consider the reasons for its popularity.

Part of the genre's popularity was its cheap nature and its ability to brighten a room. Paper ephemera was used to decorate poorer households when more expensive decorative material could not be had. Jim Bullock, a miner born in 1903, remembered that in his parents' colliery home where he grew up, 'over the fireside downstairs there was a large, framed parchment with words written in gilt, which we were made to recite before we could eat.'¹ During the First World War 'another verse was fastened to the wall which gave us all great comfort, for my brothers were fighting in France. It simply said, "A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee."² His was a fairly typical mining household of the type commonly provided for colliery employees when their place of work was distant from the local town. The house was built in the mid-nineteenth century and, when Jim was young, had as many as sixteen people living in it at one time.³ The type of ephemera favoured by the family was religious, but its placement, in the hub of the house, is indicative of where these paper decorations would have been placed within many homes. Jim's recollections also indicate that the ephemeral decorations used within the home were topical: additional pieces of paper were added during key events and were adapted to suit the new circumstances in which the families found themselves. Printed ephemera therefore could perform several roles within the home: it was decorative, could offer solace, and was changed to suit the current family mood.

¹ Jim Bullock, *Bowers Row: Recollections of a mining village* (Wakefield, 1976), pp. 4–5.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*

Part of the popularity of mass ephemera lay in its sheer availability. In the year 1909, at the height of the ‘golden age’ of postcards, in Britain alone approximately 800,000,000 postcards were sold.⁴ The postcard boom had started several years before and the extreme popularity and public interest in postcards is generally said to have existed from the turn of the century to the start of the First World War.⁵ The postcard was first proposed at the Austro-German Postal Conference in Karlsruhe in 1865 by Dr Heinrich von Stephan, who argued that the brevity of this new form of correspondence ‘would be welcome on many occasions and for many purposes.’⁶ Although officially rejected, these Austrian *postblatts* were secretly produced, and their usage quickly spread to France and the rest of the continent. On 3 October 1869, the first official postcard was produced in Austria, with Britain following suit in October 1870.⁷ By 1899, there were European picture postcard clubs to collect these decorative pieces of card, with members exchanging items with other collectors in other countries: cartophilia had begun.⁸

Commercial postcards began production in Britain and Ireland in 1894, and between 1900 and 1910 it has been estimated that anywhere between one and three million were sent in the post every day.⁹ During this period, there were up to four collections of postcards a day, with as many as six in major cities, and they rapidly became the preferred way of sending a message for very little money.¹⁰ People collected postcards with a myriad of pictures printed upon them; royalty, notable events, famous politicians, sexualised images, and portraits of famous trade unionists.¹¹ Part of their popularity during the period can be explained by the lack of images in the majority of newspapers before the First World War.¹² This explains, in part, the popularity of disaster and special event postcards, which were produced to provide clearer and alternative views of what was occurring to the descriptions, or grainy images, available in newspapers. The market for postcards was consumer-driven and became a sizable international business, with manufacturers outsourcing production to other countries during the period: part of the demise of the postcard in 1914 was due to Germany being a world-

⁴ Lisa Z. Sigel, ‘Filth in the Wrong People’s Hands: Postcards and the Expansion of Pornography in Britain and the Atlantic World, 1880–1914’, *Journal of Social History* 33:1 (2000), p. 861.

⁵ Sandra Ferguson, ‘“A Murmur of Small Voices”: On the Picture Postcard in Academic Research’, *Archivaria* 60 (2005), p. 170.

⁶ Dr Heinrich von Stephan cited in Frank Staff, *The Picture Postcard and its Origins* (London, 1966), pp. 44–45.

⁷ Staff, *The Picture Postcard*, pp. 46–47.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁹ Séamus Kearns, ‘Picture Postcards as a Source for Social Historians’, *Saothar* 22 (1997), p. 130.

¹⁰ A. P. Behan, ‘History from Picture Postcards’, *Dublin Historical Record* 46:2 (1993), p. 130.

¹¹ John Fraser ‘Propaganda on the Picture Postcard’, *Oxford Art Journal* 3:2 (October 1980), p. 39.

¹² Séamus Kearns ‘Collecting Picture Postcards’, *Dublin Historical Record* 54:2 (2001), p.142.

centre for mass producing colour postcards.¹³ It was among mass excitement about this new form of collectible correspondence in the first decade of the twentieth century that producers first began to visually document disasters in reaction to public demand for visual information.

Despite their relevance as social document postcards have often been overlooked by academics. Sarah Ferguson contends that scholarly confusion about the meaning of the cards, combined with an apologist attitude towards their merit as an academic source, was common in early academic discourses on their use.¹⁴ Since 2000 there has been a slight increase in academic interest in postcards and the multiple spaces they occupied. Bjarne Rogan theorises that there were four reasons for the popularity of the picture postcard: aesthetic appeal, its souvenir status, the excitement of collecting and the practicality of postcards as a cheap form of speedy communication.¹⁵ The work of literary scholars has begun to build upon this. Julia Gillen has examined the movement of 3,000 postcards and the messages they contain, between the years 1900 and 1910, and argues that a detailed amount of information can be found through the systematic study of postcard collections.¹⁶ The strange space postcards occupy is emphasised by Marie-Monique Huss, who argues that they are many things at once: private and public; cheap and accessible; and verbal and pictorial.¹⁷ The mutability of the postcard and the milieu of competing binaries which accompany it highlights the complex memorial nature of the period. The postcard could be personal, performative, or a mixture of the two, and allows for complex understandings of the ephemeral culture of the early twentieth century to be accessed.

Depending on the intentions of the producer, disaster postcards could be created as a tool of remembrance, a way of making money for widows and orphans, or as a commercial venture. Those purchasing them could do so because they acted as a memorial to the dead, because they were interested in images of the disaster they had read about in the news, or simply because they collected postcards. In a study about Jewish mobility before the Shoah, the scholar of folk-literature, Galit Hasan-Rokem, argues that the postcard form is now seen as a type of commemorative object among Jewish communities.¹⁸ Among postcards that

¹³ Ann Wilson, 'Constructions of Irishness in a Collection of Early Twentieth-Century Picture Postcards', *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 39:1 (2015), p. 97; Ferguson, 'A Murmur of Small Voices', p. 172.

¹⁴ Ferguson, 'A Murmur of Small Voices', p. 173.

¹⁵ Bjarne Rogan, 'An Entangled Object: The Picture Postcard as Souvenir and Collectible, Exchange and Ritual Communication', *Cultural Analysis* 4 (2005), pp. 4–5.

¹⁶ See Julia Gillen, 'Writing Edwardian Postcards', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 17:4 (2013), pp. 488–521; Julia Gillen and Nigel Hall, 'Edwardian Postcards: Illuminating Ordinary Writing', in David Barton (ed.), *The anthropology of writing* (London, 2010), pp. 169–189.

¹⁷ Marie-Monique Huss, *Histoires de famille: cartes postales et culture de guerre* (Paris, 2000), p. 20

¹⁸ Galit Hasan-Rokem, 'Jews as Postcards, or Postcards as Jews: Mobility in a Modern Genre', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 99:4 (2009), p. 507.

represent hope for the future, she notes that, in the collection studied there are, ‘relatively many depictions of disaster, sorrow, and pain’, yet, on the reverse of these postcards with upsetting images are messages about trivial matters.¹⁹ While this, in general, is also true for postcards about mining disasters, upon occasion there are examples of a disaster card being sent with some lines about the disaster accompanying it. One woman wrote a message on a postcard, produced by Sword Studios, Gateshead & West Stanley, bearing the image of the crowd waiting for news on 26 February, saying that some mutual acquaintances had been visiting at the weekend, and that she and another woman were present at West Stanley on the Sunday, writing ‘it was very sad seeing all the funerals.’²⁰ This is a rare example among the few that have been written on that reference the disaster. Another man wrote to his daughter on the reverse of a view of the pit, with a caption about the disaster, about how the pit ponies lived, and that he thought there was a resident colliery cat who sometimes went down the shaft.²¹ The dissemination of the cards at all is unusual as most of the examples seen do not have any writing on them and they were seemingly used for collection or display purposes.

Disaster postcards were produced in the wake of a variety of disasters, such as fires, civil structures collapsing, and shipwrecks, but they predominantly recorded mining and rail disasters. They appear to have been particularly popular before and during the First World War with their status fading as a medium for news with the advent of the increased provision of images in the press. Major disasters with extensive collections include the West Stanley (1909) and Senghenydd (1913) ones in North East England and South Wales respectively. The number of print runs for each type of postcard is, in nearly all cases, unknown. The amount printed could vary from the tens to the thousands and many modern collectors use their knowledge of the trade and the likelihood of each type selling to estimate how popular these would have been. Postcards were generally sold for small sums and could be sold for as little as six for a penny.²² Photographic postcards of the Washington Disaster in 1908, with images of the victims, were sold at twopence each.²³ The disposable income of a miner is difficult to estimate; a good ‘hewer’ in the Stanley pit earned £2 10s per week, compared to the £1 2s earned by an agricultural worker.²⁴ According to John Benson’s estimates, the cost of living stayed largely the same between 1850 and 1906, but living wages increased.²⁵ It is highly likely that the vast majority of families during the period could have afforded, and would have

¹⁹ Hasan-Rokem, ‘Jews as Postcards’, pp. 533–534.

²⁰ George Nairn, private collection.

²¹ George Nairn, private collection.

²² Kearns, ‘Picture Postcards’, p. 130.

²³ George Nairn, private collection.

²⁴ Hewer’s wage from Eric Forster, *The Death Pit* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), p.7; Agricultural worker’s figure from ‘Earnings and Hours of Labour of Workpeople of the United Kingdom, Enquiry V’ in P. Ford & G. Ford (eds.), *A Breviate of Parliamentary Papers, 1900-1916*, (Oxford, 1957), p. 226.

²⁵ John Benson, *The Working Class in Britain* (London, 1989), p. 55.

bought, at least a few postcards within their lifetime. Some were even given away in newspapers as a promotional tool, such as a special ‘Giant Postcard’ produced by *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* after the Cadeby Main disaster (1912) in Yorkshire.²⁶

These items of ephemera were generally sold by news vendors, such as W. H. Smith & Sons, or by hawkers who sold them at large events. The presence of hawkers at funerals was, according to Maurice Rickards, common in the sale of these types of mass memorial ephemeral items; yet their intrusion into the day and the blatant advertisement of memorial ephemera was not always deemed appropriate by onlookers.²⁷ This was sometimes judged to be in poor taste by the crowds attending the events. In 1911 there was an accident involving a Co-Operative choir and a Char-a-Banc in Durham in which ten people were killed and several more injured.²⁸ It was reported that the funerals bore a resemblance to the ones at West Stanley due to the sheer number of people in the crowd, and that ‘the only incongruous incident of the day was the raucous voice of a street hawker calling memorial cards at a penny each.’²⁹

Special runs of postcards were created for significant public events. The funeral of King Edward VII in 1910 produced a range of postcard collections depicting the funeral procession. Messrs. C. W. Faulkner of London produced several series; the cheapest, a set of postcards depicting the funeral procession priced at twelve cards for sixpence, and other individual cards costing between sixpence and one shilling each.³⁰ Local businesses also produced postcard sets to sell, such as C. Helmrich and Sons, Aberdeen, who published and printed postcards of the funeral, to be made available in local shops.³¹ These were seemingly desirable items: a man was sentenced to four months hard labour for the theft of a packet of several dozen postcards of the funeral of the king.³²

Disaster postcards tend to adhere to a number of categories: images of the place the disaster struck, events surrounding the disaster, such as the funerals of the dead, and photographs of the rescuing parties and those whom they rescued. Some producers published specialist postcards, such as Warner Gothard and his photomontage creations, and, on occasion, artists with some skill would sketch a card that was then printed [See Fig. 25].³³ The first type of postcard produced after a disaster typically included images of the place where

²⁶ NCMM, YKSMM: 1991.320.

²⁷ Maurice Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera: A Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator, and Historian* (British Library, London, 2000), p. 221; 314.

²⁸ *The Consett Guardian*, ‘Memento of the Motor Char-a-Banc Calamity, Saturday, August 26th, 1911’ (Consett, Robt. Jackson & Co.), p. 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁰ *The Lichfield Mercury*, 3 June 1910, p. 8.

³¹ *Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 24 May 1919, p. 4.

³² *Daily Mail*, 30 May 1910, p. 4.

³³ George Nairn, private collection.

the calamity struck and crowds waiting for news about the event. Photographers documented stoic wives, small children, and the procession of coffins from the pit head. Some of the most famous instances of these were produced after the 1913 Senghenydd disaster when a Glaswegian photographer, W. Benton, who happen to be in the area, took multiple photographs of scenes at the pithead. He photographed local clergy talking to bereft women, children waiting to hear if their fathers were alive, and Salvation Army workers talking to the bereaved.³⁴ A popular image after mining disasters was that of coffins being transported to or from the makeshift mortuaries which sprung up at the pithead. After the Senghenydd disaster in 1913, Benton produced a postcard which showed miners carrying empty coffins into the mortuary to be filled with the body of an identified man [See Fig. 26]. These images tend to focus on the comradeship of the miners who are carrying the coffins and, as with those of people aiding the bereaved, are attempting to capture the activity surrounding the pit head soon after an explosion.

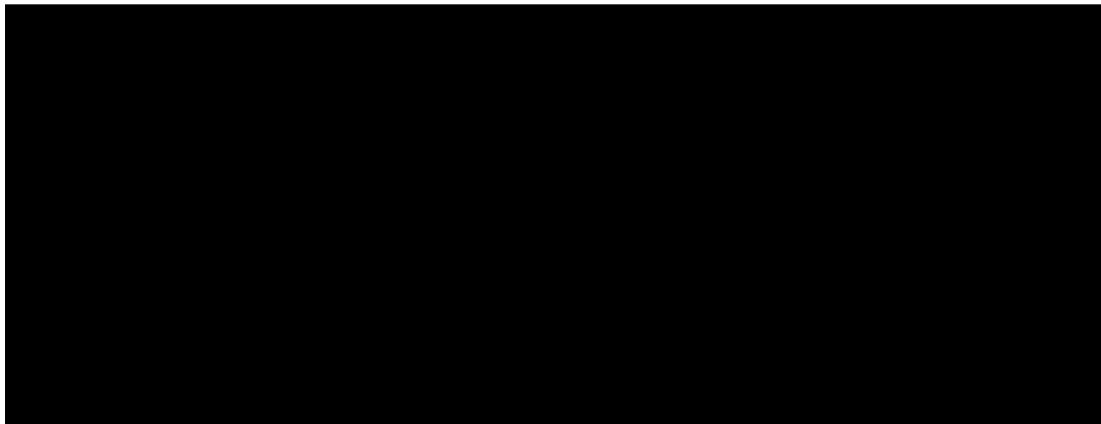


Fig. 25. Hand-drawn postcard, M.MacKay.³⁵

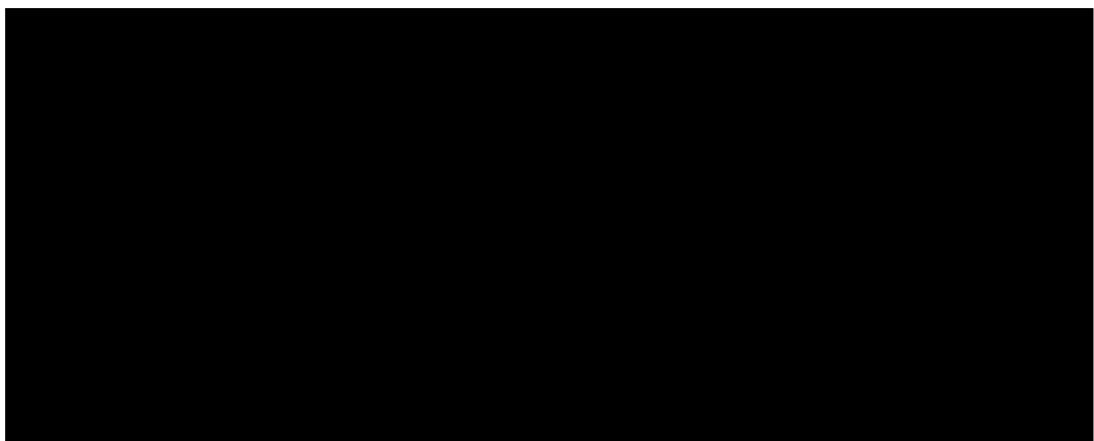


Fig. 26. Benton postcard.³⁶

³⁴ PCW, Senghenydd Pit Disaster 12; 15; 16.

³⁵ George Nairn, private collection.

³⁶ PCW, Senghenydd Pit Disaster 6.

Photographs depicting the impact of tragedy and the immediacy of grief can be seen as somewhat intrusive of the privacy of the bereaved. Susan Sontag has questioned the purpose of horrific imagery and its dissemination, arguing that the viewing of photographs which depict tragedy is an act of voyeurism and turns the viewer into a spectator of the horror for little moral gain, because one already knew that the event was tragic before viewing the photograph.³⁷ Many of these photographic postcards of the aftermath of tragedy are exactly that: they are voyeuristic snapshots into somebody else's personal tragedy. There has been some criticism about the ways in which the photographers converged on villages after mining disasters by ex-miners who lived in the vicinity. Eric Forster, author of *The Death Pit*, and ex-miner himself wrote with some criticism about those who watched and took photographs of the dead rather than worked to aid the rescue.³⁸ This later criticism (Forster was writing in the 1960s) reflects a real anger present in many of the narratives of mining disasters written by local historians, although it unclear if this reflects a general anger from within the communities about the intrusion into their grief which was conferred to miners who would have been children when these events occurred.

Similar photographs, transferred onto postcards, emerged after railway disasters. After the Quintinshill Railway Crash in 1915, postcards documenting the number of people who came to view the disaster and aid the victims were popular. Paul Fyfe has argued that between 1850 and 1890 the images of railway disasters that came to dominate the *Illustrated London News* were, as he has coined them, of a 'catastrophic picturesque'.³⁹ These images of disasters juxtaposed with natural scenery were, Fyfe argues, a way of expressing fears about modernity and the increased danger that mechanisation had brought with it.⁴⁰ These picturesque disaster images had disappeared by the turn of the century: succeeded by grittier photographs documenting the tragedy of the event. The picturesque could no longer be hidden by an artist's interpretation of disaster. Newspaper images after railway accidents included makeshift mortuaries and covered corpses lying on grass verges.⁴¹ Postcard images included men and women treating the wounded immediately after the crash, and another showing volunteers loading the wounded on to an ambulance train [See Fig. 27]. Indeed, so upsetting

³⁷ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London, 2003), p. 82.

³⁸ Forster, *The Death Pit*, p. 24.

³⁹ Paul Fyfe, 'Illustrating the Accident: Railways and the Catastrophic Picturesque in *The London Illustrated News*', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 46:1 (2013), p. 63.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴¹ DGA, D37524, p. 58.

a potential did these items hold that, in 1905, the sale of postcards depicting the Cromer express disaster was prohibited at railway bookstalls.⁴²



Fig. 27. Quintinshill Railway Accident.⁴³

Images of the rescuers were also highly popular and small series with a limited print run featuring these men involved in mining disasters were regularly printed. Prominent figures in the rescue efforts, who had been named by the press, were often portrayed on their own in at least one postcard. A popular series of postcards printed in the wake of the West Stanley disaster was produced by J. S. and W. G. Wilson of Stanley who photographed the rescuers and then printed these portraits. Remaining examples of these cards portray both individual men and groups. One of the individuals photographed was Frank Keegan (the footballer Kevin Keegan's grandfather), who was a local inspector and 'One of Whom the 26 Survivors owe their Lives.'⁴⁴ Another card depicts Ned Pace, who was heavily featured in the press as he had been rescued in the Wingate disaster in 1906, and became a rescuer in the West Stanley disaster three years later [See Fig. 28]. Groups of rescuers who were unnamed were also portrayed, usually with their mining paraphernalia, such as a safety lamp or a pickaxe.⁴⁵ The reproduction of these photographs ensured that newspaper readers were able to associate a name with an image, and photographic portraits of the rescuers were seemingly popular in the local area after mining disasters.

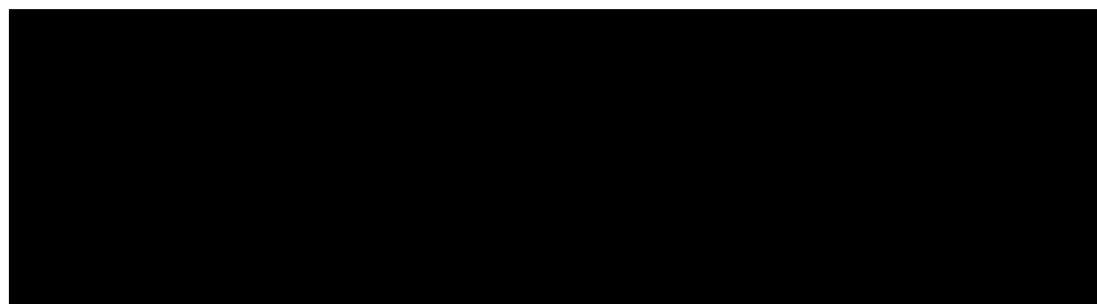


Fig. 28. Ned Pace.⁴⁶

⁴² *Essex Newman*, 16 September 1905, p. 1.

⁴³ DPM, Postcard Collection, Unknown Accession Number.

⁴⁴ BM, Acc No. 2006-58.6.

⁴⁵ BM, K.152 A.

⁴⁶ BM, K.152.

Those who were rescued also formed the basis for collections of postcards. One man who raised a substantial amount for the widows and orphans fund was William Gardner, who escaped from the ruins of the West Stanley mines with a pit pony. The pony was gifted to him by the colliery owner, and together they toured the north east raising fund, including a cameo in the previously mentioned Durham Amateur Dramatic Society performance.⁴⁷ As a notable duo, they were portrayed on postcards, sometimes with groups and sometimes as the subject of the image [See Fig. 29]. Given the reaction of the Durham Amateur Dramatic Society crowds when they arrived on stage and the pony was revealed to be the brown one, not the white one that is emphasised in the image below, it seems that postcards bearing these images, as well as the image of a posed white pit pony in the newspaper, possibly the same image as on this postcard, were reasonably well circulated.

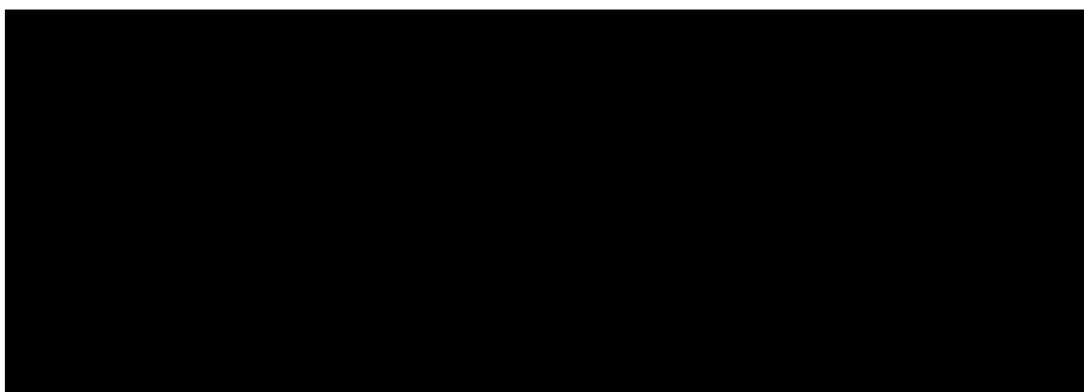


Fig. 29. Postcard of rescued group, including Gardner and his (brown) pony.⁴⁸

Postcards showing the funerals of the deceased were very common after mining disasters. The images of the funerals highlight the sheer mass of people who attended. In the aftermath of the Washington Glebe disaster in 1908, one card simply shows the streams of people following a coffin to the cemetery [See Fig. 30]. One photograph taken at the church in West Stanley and turned into a postcard shows a woman who fainted being carried away on a stretcher through the crush of people who had congregated [See Fig. 31]. The *Auckland Times* reported that sixty two injuries were sustained during the funerals, with forty four people fainting, six fainting from being crushed, six epileptic fits, three cases of hysteria, one case of apoplexy, a crushed rib, and one concussion from an individual falling from a wall, all of which were dealt with by the Dean and Chapter division of the St Johns Ambulance

⁴⁷ *Durham County Advertiser*, 26 March 1909, p. 7.

⁴⁸ George Nairn, private collection.

Brigade.⁴⁹ Others show the pit banners, swathed in black crape as a sign of respect for the dead, being paraded as part of the funeral processions [See Fig. 32].

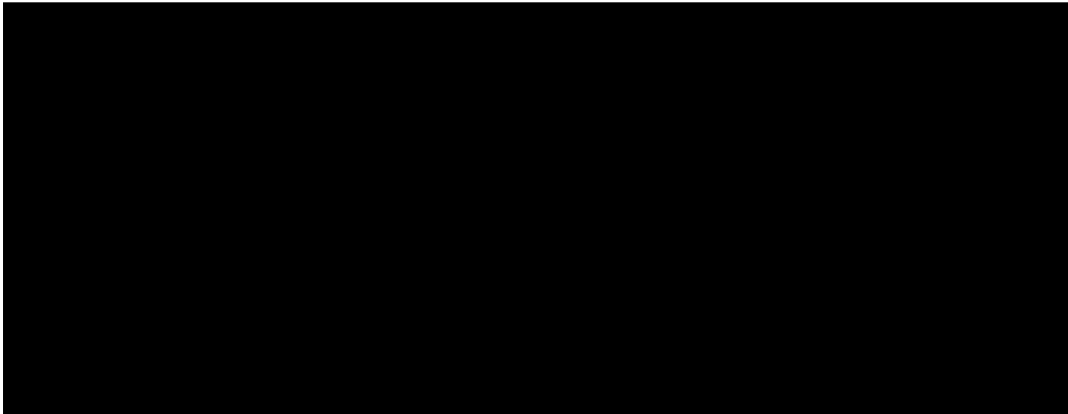


Fig. 30. Crowd at Washington Glebe disaster funerals.⁵⁰

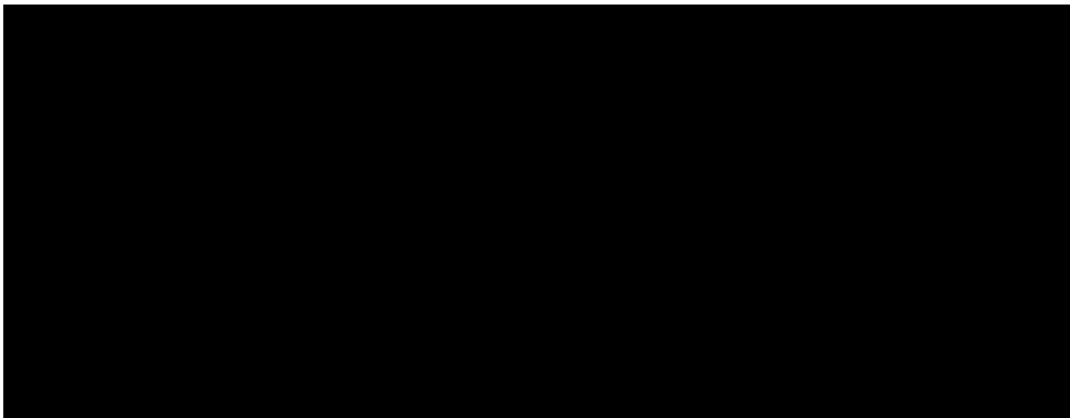


Fig. 31. Woman fainting at West Stanley funerals.⁵¹

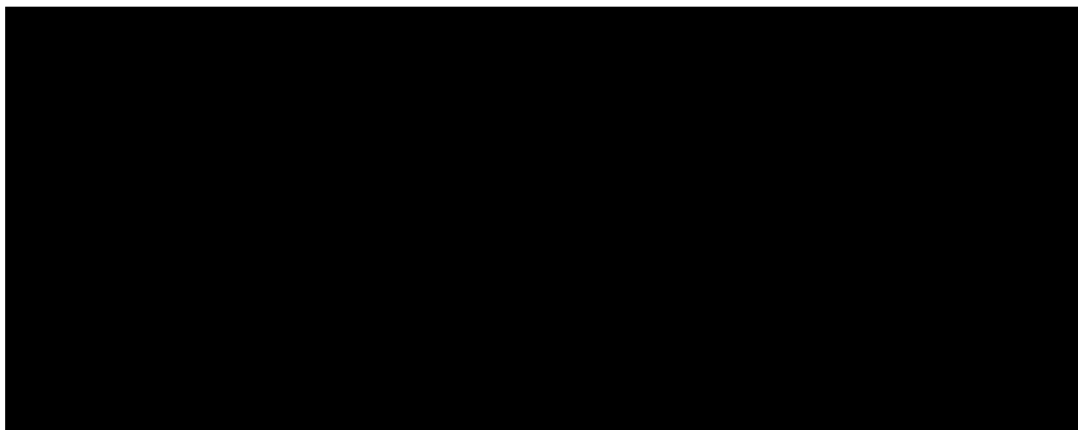


Fig. 32. Colliery banner covered in black crape.⁵²

⁴⁹ *The Auckland Times*, 26 February 1909, p. 7.

⁵⁰ George Nairn, private collection.

⁵¹ George Nairn, private collection.

⁵² George Nairn, private collection.

Photographs of the graves, transferred onto postcards, were also sold. These types of postcard were reasonably straightforward: they were photographs backed on to cardboard with postcard marks stamped on the reverse and normally included a small, often handwritten, message over the photograph which explained the subject matter. Following the West Stanley disaster, photographs of ‘the trench’, the mass grave dug in the local churchyard, were shown as coffins were being passed over the crowd for internment and again after the trench had been filled [See Figs. 33 and 34]. Similarly, a postcard of the Catholic churchyard and a single boy left at the graveside of what we are led to assume is his father or a close relative, since the boy is in mourning clothes, was photographed and disseminated [See Fig. 35]. These types of postcards provide valuable information about the funeral processions and the burial grounds which were created after mining disasters. Perhaps what is less clear is the audience for these images. They were not produced until after the funerals, thus lost their chance to be sold at them, which suggests that there was a rich trade of selling them in local shops, or by street hawkers who visited nearby towns after the funerals.

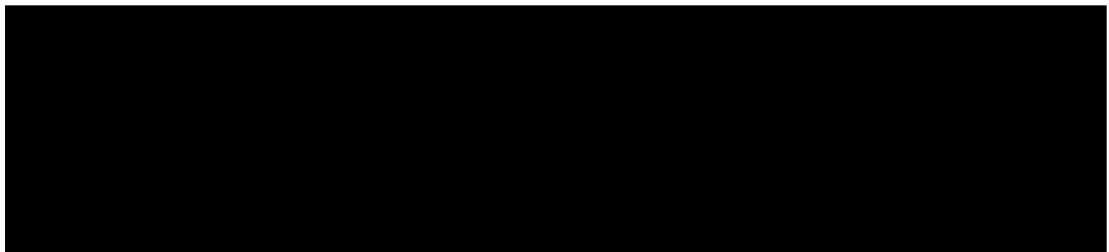


Fig. 33. West Stanley Trench (open).⁵³

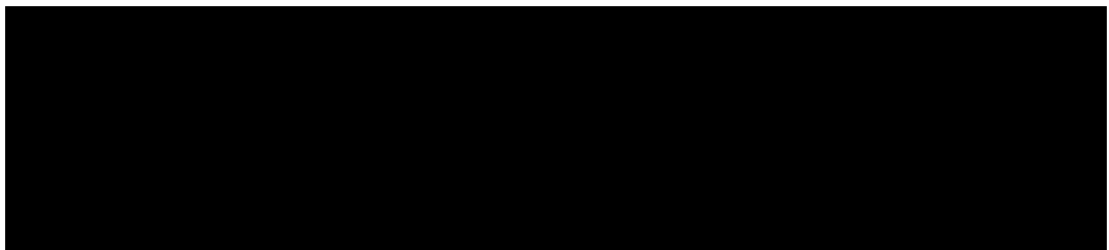


Fig. 34. West Stanley Trench (filled).⁵⁴

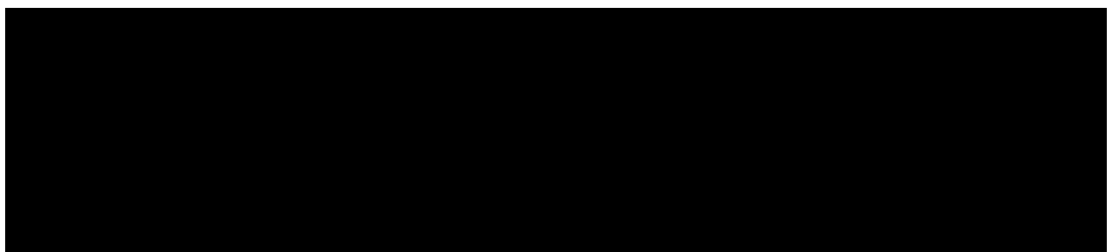


Fig. 35. Small boy in Catholic Cemetery.⁵⁵

⁵³ George Nairn, private collection.

⁵⁴ George Nairn, private collection.

⁵⁵ George Nairn, private collection.

In contrast to these simple postcards which relied on the reproduction of photographs, were the elaborate photomontage postcards produced by Warner Gothard, which featured images of the dead, copied from family photographs. This style of postcard was popular in the decade preceding the First World War. They often featured images of the dead, or, less often, the rescuers, and were produced after railway and mining disasters during the period. All cards feature family photographs which were also used in family remembrance practices. For example, James Wake was killed in the Washington Glebe Pit disaster in 1908. His granddaughter still has a family portrait of him, his wife, and his children, hung above her mantelpiece and she cannot remember it not being above her mother's mantelpiece when she was alive.⁵⁶ The image of him in the family portrait is clearly the same as one of him included in a postcard, in the right top-hand corner, produced in 1908 [See Fig. 36]. The family of Thomas Anderson, who pasted his photograph in a memorial card, also had his image reproduced on a photomontage postcard of the West Stanley disaster in 1909 [See Fig. 37]. His image does not appear on any other memorial material which uses photographs of the deceased. It is unclear how Gothard got these photographs: they may have been given freely, taken when they were being reproduced in other places, in a newspaper office for example, or given by another family member.

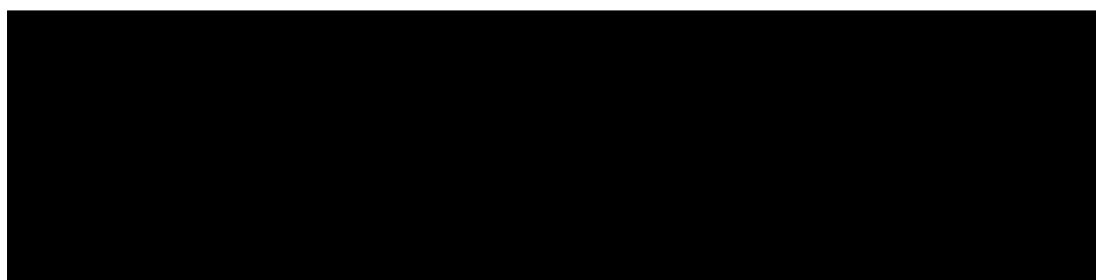


Fig. 36. Reproduction of James Wake on Gothard postcard (top right-hand corner).⁵⁷

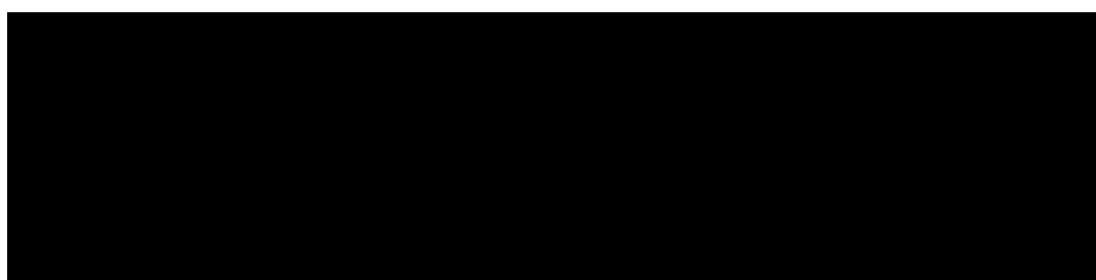


Fig. 37. Gothard Memorial Postcard featuring Thomas Anderson (top row, fourth from the left).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Interview with Joan Nichols, 29 February 2016.

⁵⁷ My thanks to Joan Nichols, for allowing me to reproduce these images.

⁵⁸ BM, No Accession Number; 2006-58.4.

The Gothard postcards, in particular, reveal the thirst for visual material that accompanied this in the pre-war years. An example of a set of Gothard postcards indicates both the rapidity with which they were produced and the speed at which they were replaced with more relevant examples by the production company. After the West Stanley disaster in 1909, Gothard produced a postcard titled 'Explosion at the West Stanley Colliery, Durham, February 16th 1909' that shows the colliery, placed on a textured background with the phrases 'over 180 miners entombed' and 'nearly 150 losing their lives', reflecting the estimates printed in the newspapers at the time of production.⁵⁹ This example was superseded by an updated example using the same images as the original, but with corrected phrases, '168 lost their lives' 'only 36 survivors', which was then sold in the Newcastle branch of W. H. Smith & Sons.⁶⁰ Using estimations of the dead appearing in the newspapers it is likely that the first version of the postcard was produced as little as two days after the explosion and the second iteration would have been on sale in time for the funerals of the victims a few days afterwards. Yet even within the 'corrected' version of the postcard there is still an inaccuracy: at no point was there ever thought to be thirty-six survivors, suggesting that the figure may have been a result of poor handwriting somewhere along the production line: thirty men were pulled out of the pit alive, but one later succumbed to his injuries.

As with the other forms of print ephemera, the images contained on postcards sometimes originated from other sources. A memorial card with the names of the victims produced after the West Stanley disaster contains copies of lists of the dead that appear to have been cut out from the newspaper and reprinted as part of a composite postcard [See Fig. 38]. The names of the dead were highly significant in this memorial form. The circulation of the name of a dead miner offered them a place within a collective memory. Similar to the repeated use of names of the dead in wartime, the printing and dissemination of the names of those who died in disaster similarly offered the families of the deceased a way of cementing their memory of the dead into the wider public sphere. Although these memorials were not cast in stone, stone memorials were not generally afforded to the disaster dead, these memorial cards offered a similar memorial function.

As a visual memorial, these collections of images of the dead are significant: it was only in photomontage postcards or in newspaper supplements that the images of the dead were collected in one place and thus formed a visual collective memory of the dead. These forms are now used as a point of reference in the collective memory of pit disasters, often forming the illustrations on website blogs and on news stories concerning anniversaries. Postcards, in general, are also used in this way and the popular record of British and Welsh mining disasters

⁵⁹ BPC, NEG6018; *Durham Chronicle*, 19 February 1909, p. 7.

⁶⁰ DCRO, D/MRP 31/2 (ii).

is dominated by this ephemeral form. Their common themes - waiting at the pithead and the funerals of the victims - were published as these were the parts of the disasters focused on by the newspapers. But their production has ensured that the view of mining disasters which remains is dominated by these scenes, dictated by photographs taken and widely reproduced.

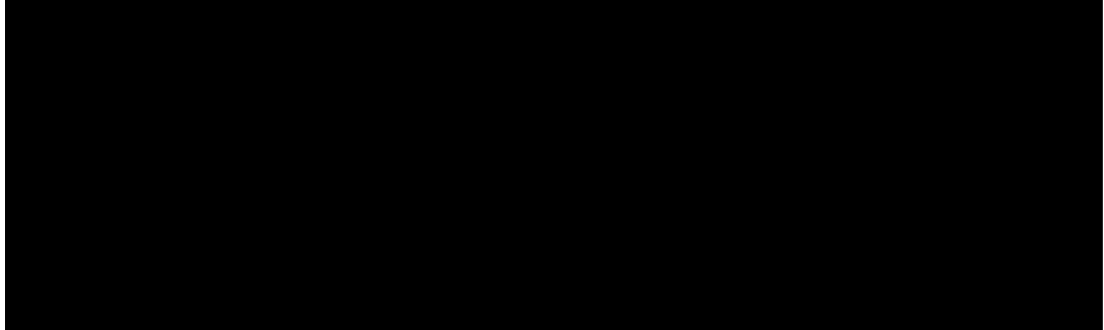


Fig. 38. West Stanley Memorial Postcard.⁶¹

This cultural narrowing, forged by media representations in time of tragedy is, to a certain extent, also true of wartime images. The War Office Press Bureau also used postcards to disseminate images of the war that they deemed acceptable as part of a larger wartime propaganda drive.⁶² Especially in the latter two years of the war, recognising the emotional toll the war of attrition had taken on the populace, married with the heavy blows to local communities cause by the Battle of the Somme, there was a concerted effort on behalf of the National War Aims Committee (NWAC) to produce the sort of propaganda needed to boost civilian morale. The NWAC Publications Department disseminated two weekly newspapers, pamphlets, leaflets, calendars, and posters, with most of its distribution carried out free of charge by W. H. Smith & Son.⁶³ Printed ephemera posed the perfect vessel for the dissemination of propaganda: it utilised pre-existing networks of dissemination to provide up-to date official spin on current happenings. More importantly, propaganda ensured that the hierarchy of sacrifice was adhered to. As David Monger writes, ‘it was reasonable to demand further civilian self-sacrifice [through propaganda] because service-men ... were making far greater sacrifices.’⁶⁴ As much as commercial ephemera was being shaped by perceptions of the war, so too was official ephemera shaping public perceptions.

⁶¹ George Nairn, private collection.

⁶² For information on the War Office Press Bureau see Michael L Sanders & Philip M Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914–1918* (London, 1982); Jane Carmichael, *First World War Photographers* (London, 1989), especially Chapter 3.

⁶³ David Monger, ‘Transcending the Nation: Domestic Propaganda and Supranational Patriotism in Britain, 1917–18’, in Troy Paddock (ed.), *World War I and Propaganda* (Leiden, 2014), p. 23.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Responding to a public need for images of the Western Front, the *Daily Mail* produced a series of official war photography postcards in September 1916. They were initially sold with eight cards in a packet, with three styles to choose from, ‘coloured’, ‘photogravure’, or ‘photo facsimile’, were priced at sixpence per set, and could be ordered through local newsagents.⁶⁵ Originally, there were only seven sets to choose from, but this had risen to twenty two sets by April 1917, indicating the popularity of the venture.⁶⁶ They allowed people to pre-order the cards and, due to the high levels of interest in the cards, postponed the sales release by six days.⁶⁷ The cards were reproductions of official war photographs, all photography being tightly controlled by the state during wartime, and were sanctioned for publication by the War Office Press Bureau. One such postcard depicted the burial of two British soldiers. After their publication the *Daily Mail* launched a small appeal for information about the family of one of the soldiers, although nothing further was printed about this.⁶⁸ The type of images disseminated by the *Daily Mail* are now synonymous with the First World War: certainly, in the first few sets of postcards advertised, they focused on the soldier, using a sanitised version of war which disproportionately focused on the Western Front. These respectful, sanitised, images are now heavily associated with the remembrance of war, and this select construction of remembrance can be seen early on in the images which were chosen for general dissemination.

After the First World War, postcards depicting sites of memory were also produced, and postcards showing views of local war memorials and IWGC cemeteries were common.⁶⁹ Variations on local commemorative themes ranged from the village memorials themselves to postcards reproducing plaques containing the names of those who had died. One such was a postcard produced with the names of those who had died from Fatfield, a small village in County Durham, which contains the name of Thomas Nattrass, whose body-identifying locket was discussed in a previous chapter.⁷⁰ Similar to this were the collections of postcards made of France, and of the IWGC graveyards there. These postcards could offer an image of the landscape in which a loved one’s body was buried. They could complement the individual images of the grave that people could apply for, and supplemented people’s understanding of how the cemeteries were arranged and what they looked like. These postcard collections could, as with all other collections, be seen as containing material which could be used for the

⁶⁵ *Daily Mail*, 25 August 1916, p. 3; 6 September 1916, p. 5.

⁶⁶ *Daily Mail*, 25 August 1916, p. 3; 18 April 1917, p. 1

⁶⁷ *Daily Mail*, 26 August 1916, p. 1.

⁶⁸ *Daily Mail*, 16 September 1916, p. 7.

⁶⁹ The IWM is currently cataloguing a large collection of First World War memorial postcards.

⁷⁰ George Nairn, private collection.

purposes of memorialisation or be used to provide additional images of the sites shown in newspapers.

This type of ephemera is also key in understanding where some of the common tropes associated with mining disasters and modern warfare have come from. Sontag, among others, has drawn attention to the power of the image in distorting views about warfare.⁷¹ Aby Warburg drew attention to the resonance of images which contain great pathos, arguing that memory which stems from these grows increasingly subjective.⁷² The photographs so widely reproduced on postcards are now, largely, the only images of early twentieth century disasters in circulation. Some others were printed in newspapers, but their quality was poor (hence the popularity of the postcard), meaning the images displayed on postcards have become the modern remembrance tool for community groups, internet users, and museums. Take, for example, a recent display at the National Railway Museum: the entirety of the images from the display are taken from postcards and, in the case of the nineteenth century disasters described, drawings.⁷³ This is not a problem in and of itself: what other visual materials would they use? How else does one convey tragedy to a largely visual audience? However, these images have the power to influence the memory of disaster, and it is not acknowledged that the images of the disaster offer a public facing and immediate response to tragedy, which distorts the experience of the community and of the bereaved. In the Senghenydd disaster sets produced by Benton, the image is that of people waiting at the pit head, the Salvation Army assisting the wives and widows waiting for news, and the funerals. What is not shown is the family response, behind closed doors, and the long-term effects of loss on the family. We do not see the visitors at the graveside the day after the funeral. All of this has helped to shape the remembrance of mining disasters. Similarly, the War Office controlling images of the battlefield and disseminating certain images through the *Daily Mail* postcard collections presents a reasonably sanitary, Western Front focused, view of the war. When these past events are discussed it is these images which are brought to mind. The tropes of the widow waiting at the pithead, or soldiers carrying the wounded on a stretcher, were beginning to be constructed very early on in the remembrance process. The power of ephemera in shaping the public remembrance of the dead, both in the early twentieth century and continuing on to today, is strong indeed.

Mass memorial cards are closely related to, but not quite the same as, postcards. They were commonly produced after disasters from the mid-Victorian period until the late 1930s.

⁷¹ Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, pp. 44–52.

⁷² Christopher D. Johnson, *Memory, Metaphor, and Aby Warburg's Atlas of Images* (New York, 2017), p. 4.

⁷³ This was true of the display up until August 2018. The Museum is currently redesigning this section of its exhibits.

Early examples were sold after disasters such as the loss of *HMS Captain* (1870) and the *Princess Alice* disaster (1878).⁷⁴ These pieces of printed cardboard, or even strong paper, were typically plain, printed only in black, and contained the name of the disaster and basic information about where and when it was as well as the number of people who died, sometimes with lists of the dead and the name of the street they lived in, and a few verses about the disaster. These items were generally rather small, but occasionally a large one (designed to be displayed on a wall) was produced; such as a memorial card to those who died in the Milfraen Colliery in 1929 which was nearly A4 in size.⁷⁵ Often, the content of the mass memorial cards was a simplified version of the information printed in local newspapers. These were cheaply produced and sold for very little money, normally a penny, in the wake of a disaster.⁷⁶ As with postcards, these pieces of ephemera were created in swift response to an event and memorial messages were often overprinted on existent memorial card stock to create a speedy memorial response. This can be seen, for example, on a mass memorial card created in the wake of the Prince of Wales Pit Disaster in 1878: the slim border has been overprinted with a much heavier black line which framed the memorial message and conveyed its memorial tone.⁷⁷

A few ornate examples of mass memorial cards, popular in the late nineteenth century, remain in various archives. In the wake of disasters in the late nineteenth century, larger ornamental memorial cards can be found, such as to the memory of a dam which burst in Sheffield in 1864, killing approximately 240 people.⁷⁸ As with postcards, the information provided could be inaccurate or speedily produced, the memorial card printed after the Sheffield flood estimated that 260 people were lost and incorrectly lists the date as 12 March, whereas the disaster happened the day before. These types of larger memorial card were produced to be mounted on a black background and framed.⁷⁹ Smaller examples of these were also produced. After the Seaham Colliery Explosion in 1880 a memorial message was overprinted on a memorial card commonly used for a single death [See Fig. 39]. A similar example to the Seaham colliery memorial card was produced after the death of Rev James Gawthorn who died in 1857 in Derby [See Fig. 40]. Both feature the sarcophagus as a place of mourning with various allusions to death surrounding it, such as an angel, weeping willow trees, urns, and ferns. This type of embossed memorial card, with the printed message on a sarcophagus, was common in the 1880s and 1890s and was usually used to commemorate an individual. New techniques in printing meant that these embossed styles, sometimes with ornamental cut-outs, became popular and their usage spread from personal memorial cards to

⁷⁴ Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera*, p. 157.

⁷⁵ RBA, SWCC MNA/NUM/3/7/14.

⁷⁶ BM, 1995.82.

⁷⁷ StF, MS 3949-1 42-37-1.

⁷⁸ JJCol, Funerary Box 6. Memorial card for Sheffield Dam disaster.

⁷⁹ Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera*, p. 157.

mass memorial ones. In the aftermath of the disaster, printers repurposed standard memorial cards and overprinted them with information about a large number of people who died. As with the other cards which characterise this genre of ephemera, it was printed hastily. The text only just fits into the space allotted to it and the words found on a beam in the mine ‘J. Riley, J. McClochlen, J. Fletcher, J. Drainer the other 5 o’clock; we have been Praying to God’ are offset.⁸⁰ These early examples are highly decorative and had largely fallen out of fashion by the turn of the century. However, plain examples of mass memorial cards, which were easier and cheaper to produce, were also present from the 1860s onwards: elaborate Victorian designs and the more modern style characteristic of the early twentieth century were produced in tandem for much of the later nineteenth century.

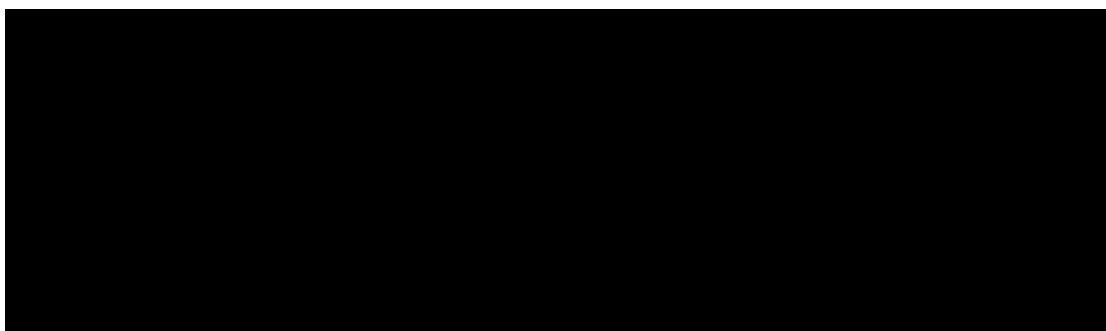


Fig. 39. Memorial Card, Seaham Colliery disaster.⁸¹

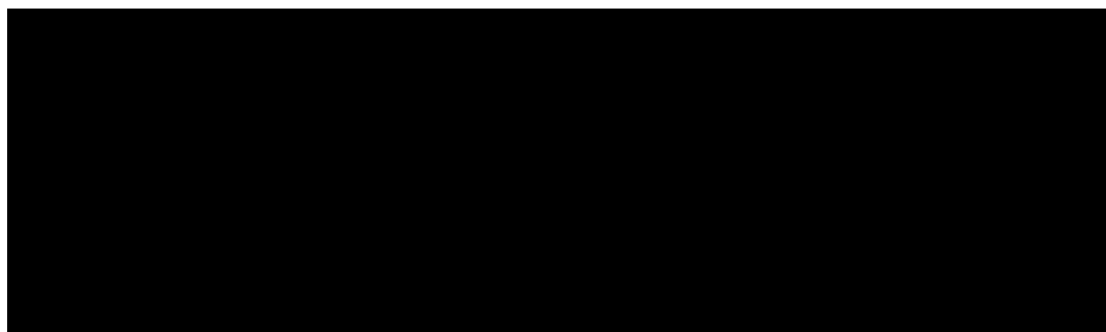


Fig. 40. Memorial Card to the Rev. Gawthorn.⁸²

While the production of postcards slowed after the First World War, there are still several examples of mass memorial cards from the interwar years. On 30 March 1925, the Scotswood pit in Northumberland flooded and 38 men were drowned. Within a day, the missing men were listed in *The Times* along with their addresses.⁸³ One mass memorial that was produced for the victims was very similar in style to that of earlier cards. It was simple and featured a number of different fonts with a plain black border. It proclaimed that the card

⁸⁰ BM, F.245.

⁸¹ BM, F.245.

⁸² JJCol, Funerary Box 5, Rev James Gawthorn memorial card.

⁸³ *The Times*, 31 March 1925, p. 16.

was ‘In Loving Memory of the 38 Miners who Lost their Lives in the View Pit, Montague Colliery, Scotswood, Newcastle-on-Tyne, which was flooded on the 30th day of March, 1925. And as an expression of Sympathy for the Bereaved Families’ [See Fig. 41]. In many ways this is very similar to mass memorial cards that were produced in the wake of the Tudhoe explosion in 1882, or the Pelton Fell Pit Disaster in 1866 [See Fig. 42].⁸⁴ All are framed with a black border to indicate mourning and use a variety of fonts. They are reasonably plain, in contrast to the earlier, more ornate cards which were disseminated between the 1860s and 1880s, and contained only printed text. While photographic processes meant that the postcard saw a rise in popularity in the twentieth century, the plain printed memorial card was a constant of pit disasters from at least the 1860s until well into the interwar years.

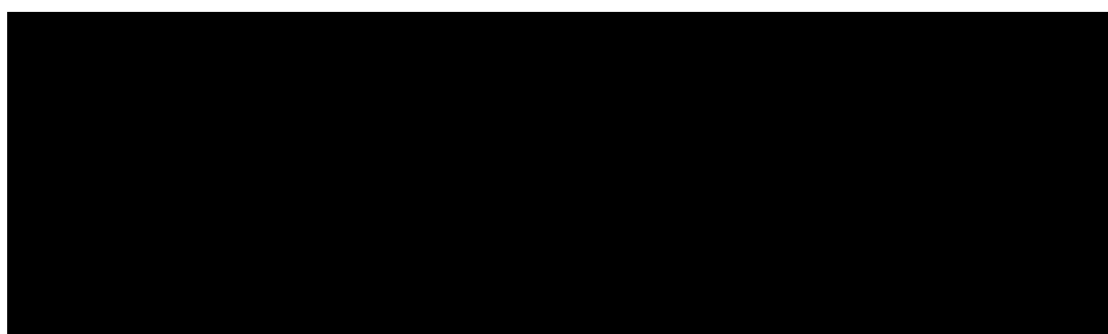


Fig. 41. Memorial Card, Scotswood Colliery disaster.⁸⁵

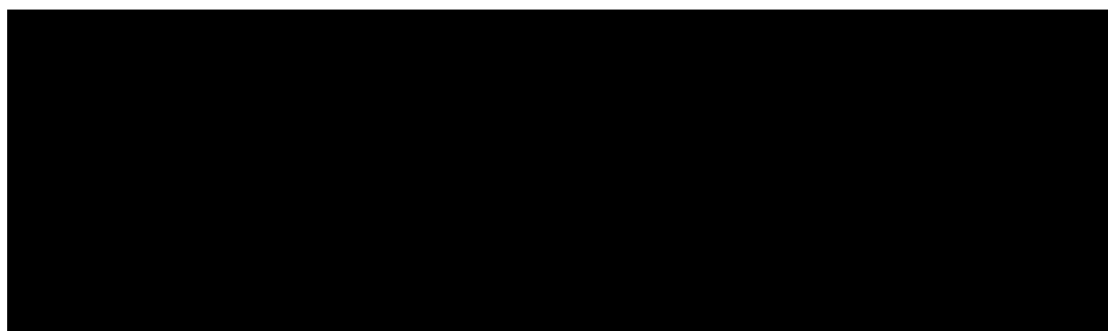


Fig. 42. Memorial Card, Tudhoe Colliery disaster.⁸⁶

Some printers used the deaths of popular individuals, or the deaths of notably tragic figures in disasters, to create memorial cards to commemorate them. As Frank Furedi notes, technological innovation, such as the press and cinema, ‘turned celebrities into object[s] of mass consumption.’⁸⁷ This was reflected in the mass of cards produced after the deaths of celebrities and political leaders in the twentieth century. The Burgess Company, most famous for printed memorial napkins, also produced crude memorial cards after popular events. These

⁸⁴ BM, Acc No. 1988.105; 4.2121.74.

⁸⁵ BM, Acc No. K.180.

⁸⁶ BM, Acc No. 4.2121.74.

⁸⁷ Frank Furedi, ‘Celebrity Culture’, *Society* 47:6 (2010), p. 493.

were printed on hinged memorial card stock and were more common after an individual death than as a mass memorial card form. Poorly printed memorial cards were produced for the death of such public figures as Earl Roberts (1914), Earl Kitchener (1916), and William Wheatley (1926).⁸⁸ These forms of memorial card to those who died in war or disaster were produced until at least the mid-1930s.⁸⁹ The printers also provided unofficial souvenir memorial service pamphlets and souvenir napkins to sell at a memorial service in St Paul's Cathedral to Captain Charles Fryatt, who was executed in 1916.⁹⁰ The 'service' seems to be a printed itinerary taken from a London newspaper and quickly reproduced to sell along the route. The Burgess memorial cards typify the kind of cheap street literature that was printed to commemorate famous people who died: they included crude, reproduced phrases taken from newspapers, and quick drawings, or grainy halftone photographs, of the deceased to enhance their memorial power. These items were clearly created in response to a public need. In a similar way to postcards of King Edward VII being disseminated after his death, these cheap and crude memorial cards fulfilled a public desire for souvenirs of the dead, purchased at the fringe of a memorial service, or at a local newsagents, as part of the celebrity ephemera which was growing in popularity in response to the ability to quickly produce celebrity ephemera on a large scale.

Mass memorial cards were also produced to remember civilians who died in wartime. A memorial card to the eight men and women who died in an aerial bombardment in London in 1917 was produced by the Burgess printers. It included their names and ages, where they were known, and the line, often used in memorial cards, and especially after disasters, 'In the Midst of Life, We are in Death'.⁹¹ Similarly, memorial cards were printed to the 'women, children & men' who were killed in the Silvertown munitions explosion in East London in 1917 [See Fig. 43]. This is significant, as it marks the Silvertown explosion deaths as a publicly recognised extension of wartime deaths. Local memorials to the Silvertown victims were erected and in 1919 during a visit to East London Princess Mary laid the cornerstone of St Barnabas' Hall, 'a memorial to the victims of the Silvertown explosion' and visited a local war shrine dedicated to soldiers who died, as well as 'a tablet in the temporary church to the memory of those killed by the explosion'.⁹² These civilian deaths were linked in the minds of the populace, not just by the memorials in East London, but by the ephemera produced. These mass memorial items, much like newspapers, had the advantage that they could be easily circulated and could direct attention towards important events. They provided a point of mass

⁸⁸ JJCol, Funerary Box 6. Memorial cards for Earl Roberts, Earl Kitchener, and William Wheatley.

⁸⁹ NCMM: YKSMM: 2013.1306.

⁹⁰ JJCol, Funerary Box 6. Souvenir pamphlet for the funeral of Captain Charles Fryatt; BL, 74-1899.b.10.(45).

⁹¹ JJCol, Funerary Box 6. Memorial card for aerial bombardment, 1917.

⁹² *Daily Mail*, 14 July 1919, p. 4.

memorialisation in a way that a newspaper could not and in a way which other items did not. Their popularity resided in their cheap nature but also in their pseudo-ephemeral nature: as with all memorial ephemera, these pieces of paper were designed to be kept.

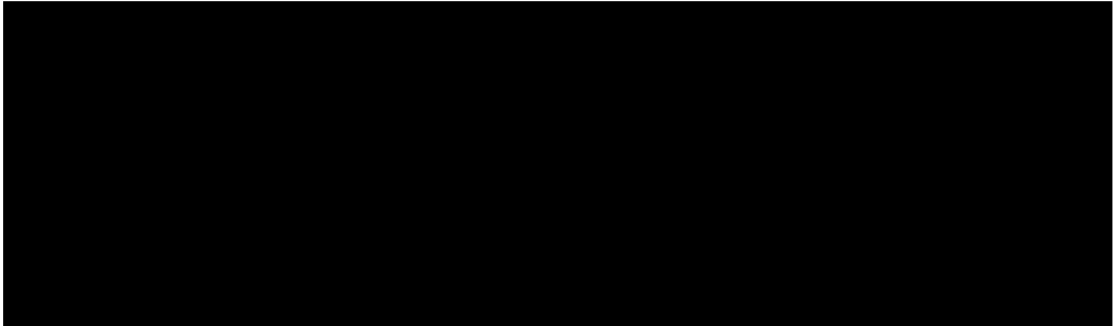


Fig. 43. Memorial Card to Silvertown Explosion Victims.⁹³

Occasionally, general military mourning cards were also issued after significant battles and were produced after the war itself had ended. Much like the cards produced to remember people who died in a disaster, cards to commemorate certain offensives were printed by Burgess. After a blocking raid on the ports of Oostende and Zeebrugge in 1918, Burgess printed a general memorial card ‘In ever loving memory of the Gallant Heroes who lost their lives in the great blockade’.⁹⁴ Again, it was printed quickly, the memorial verse has incorrectly placed quotation marks, and its intended audience is unclear. Was it produced for families of those who died in the blockade, or for a public who wanted to memorialise the dead? A similar memorial postcard was printed by a different printer in the interwar years and simply reads ‘In Loving Memory of our Fallen Heroes’, with two simple verses.⁹⁵ It is possible that this kind of memorial card was sent to the bereaved, but it is more likely it was designed to be framed or used in a commemorative way within the home.

The East London Printing Company also produced memorial cards after disasters. Like Burgess, they tended to print onto hinged memorial cards and included copies of photographs presumably sourced from newspapers or postcards of the disaster which were circulating at the time. After the wreck of the *Titanic* in 1912, they produced a memorial card, ‘In Sacred Memory’, to the victims, stating that it was ‘the most appalling disaster in Maritime History’ with a photograph of the ill-fated vessel inside the card [See Fig. 44]. The East End Company memorial cards were similar to the ones that Burgess printed; the two companies, presumably along with others who also wanted to profit from the mass memorial ephemera phenomenon, were in direct competition with each other for customers, yet there was such a

⁹³ JJCol, Funerary Box 6. Memorial card for Silvertown explosion.

⁹⁴ JJCol, Funerary Box 6. Memorial card for raid on Oostende and Zebrugge.

⁹⁵ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(23).

large market for mass memorial cards that it was clearly worthwhile for them to both continue to make similar items.



Fig. 44. Memorial card for the *Titanic*.⁹⁶

It is significant that these types of hinged memorial card, produced by Burgess and the East End Company, used the same decorative card stock as memorial cards for individuals. These types of memorial card, discussed in Chapter 5, were commissioned by families to memorialise their loved ones. The use of the same card stock, where the outside covers were identical to personal memorial cards, gave these mass memorial cards an extra layer of memorial legitimacy. That they were produced on the same card stock as personal memorial cards did not seem to alter their popularity. Compared to other types of plain mass memorial card, the ones printed on this memorial card stock seem to have been less common, but nonetheless reasonably popular among London printers, especially during the period. The polysemous nature of the memorial card form lent itself to both personal and public memorialisation, as defined by the user, being enacted through the same object.

These types of hinged mass memorial card are significant because of the ways in which they blend publicly acknowledged family ways of mourning, in the design of the hinged and decorated memorial card, with the public realm of general interest after disaster. These hinged cards, which from the outside are identical to individual mourning cards, merge the ideas of private and public remembrance of an event through an intimate item. They are a reminder that memorial cards, of all types, were a culturally prescribed ritual item, produced after death, which were profitable for printers to sell. Their presence in the realm of mass commemoration enhances their position as a form of socially dictated mourning ritual but distorts their purpose. Instead of being personal to one individual, crudely printed versions of these items were used more generally in public mourning rituals. These types of memorial card were, in a truer sense of the word, ephemeral. These mass mourning cards were not

⁹⁶ JJCol, Funerary Box 6. Memorial card for the Titanic disaster.

designed to be kept for as long a period as individual mourning cards were, yet they still occupied a central commemorative role in constructing mass memorialisation.

Broadsides also occupied this quasi-ephemeral world: some were clearly meant to be displayed in the home, much like the ephemera seen in the house of Jim Bullock, but the cheap materials and sometimes crude nature of the prints also indicated that they were not designed for long-term display. A general term for ‘a large sheet of printed paper’, among specialists ‘broadsides’ tend to refer to a piece of paper printed on one side only, and ‘broadsheets’ denote the printing of both side of the paper.⁹⁷ Sometimes these printed memorial forms consisted of paper, which was folded, and multiple pages were printed on to produce a folio pamphlet, of four pages, which contained songs or poems written after a disaster. These pieces of paper were common from the sixteenth century onward, and were used for a variety of reasons: taking the role of the town crier, alerting citizens to a change in the law or issuing instructions in an emergency, or entertaining people with satirical, or tragic, ballad forms.⁹⁸ Both broadsides, ballad sheets (a specific form of broadside comprising a single sheet with verses set to a tune), and printed poems were produced after all kinds of disaster: mining, sea, and rail. Printed almanacks, which were included in newspapers, were also created as a way of remembering mining disasters. An almanack printed for the *Consett Chronicle* in 1910 noted that these lists of dates were necessary, because ‘although a bereavement is not forgotten in a household, its exact date will occasionally slip from mind.’⁹⁹

Memorial ballads were produced following all major accidents during the nineteenth century and the practice extended well into the early twentieth century. There were ballad sheets produced after such disasters as the sinking of the *Princess Alice* (1878), the Elliot Junction railway disaster (1906), and the sinking of the *Titanic* (1912).¹⁰⁰ Generally, they contained a set of verses which were new words to be sung to a well-known tune and usually included some sort of hastily printed image, which may or may not have corresponded to the subject at hand. Both the sheets of poetry and the verses penned for ballad sheets tended to be overly sentimental and relied on rhyming couplets to give the verse its rhythm. One of the earliest surviving examples of a ballad sheet produced after a disaster is dedicated to those who died in an explosion at Dudley Port in 1849 [See Fig. 45]. The sheet was printed by W. Harris of Birmingham and illustrates the type of overcrowded design that characterised early ballad sheets: there are three sets of verses, a description of the event, quotations, and a crude wood cut image. These types of crude printed broadside were common until the 1870s and

⁹⁷ Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera*, p. 64.

⁹⁸ Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera*, p. 64.

⁹⁹ ‘Supplement to the *Consett Chronicle*’, *Consett Chronicle*, 4 February 1910.

¹⁰⁰ JJCol, Ballads 2453; Ibid, Harding B 13(245); Ballads 2065.

1880s, when more refined printing techniques became affordable for mass print ephemera. Etchings or finely printed images, instead of woodblock print, became the norm and, as a general rule, fewer memorial verses were crowded onto the paper. Instead, only one or two songs, or perhaps a few memorial verses, were printed on one sheet at a time.

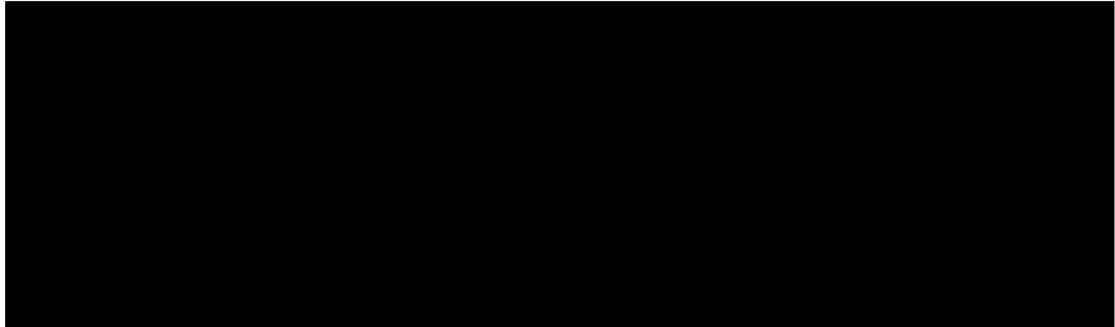


Fig. 45. Ballad sheet produced after Dudley Port disaster.¹⁰¹

Many of the memorial verses printed onto broadsides were penned by amateur poets, and some used these occasions to promote their other work. During the First World War, the Rev. T. Napoleon Smith promoted his earlier poems in memory of the *Titanic* in a booklet of memorial verses penned to his son.¹⁰² In another large broadsheet produced after the Empress of Ireland disaster in 1914, a note at the bottom from the printer notes that he ‘still has a few Copies left of the *Titanic*, Rufford, and South Wales Poems, which may be had on Application’; the ‘Rufford’ and ‘South Wales’ poems refer to mining disasters which occurred in 1913.¹⁰³ These serial poets were reasonably common, and promotion of existing work within new ballads was not unusual. Upon occasion these ephemeral poetry pieces were reused at a much later date, such as the reissuing of Napoleon Smith’s ‘The K K and the World-Wide War’, originally produced in 1916 with an overprinted margin which read:

Notice: 1916-which took one of my 5 soldier sons with it has gone; but 1939 finds war and the war-like spirit appallingly prevalent! The writer of KK in his 84th year, therefore invites the kindly acceptance of a copy (with an addition on the back), believing it will be helpful in the present EMERGENCY!-16/2/1939 T.N.S.¹⁰⁴

This reuse of stock, with a new message printed on it, was a particularly original way to disseminate surplus ephemera, and differed from the standard practice of using new disasters to sell old stock.

After Welsh colliery explosions, it was not uncommon to see memorial verses printed either solely in Welsh, or Welsh and English within the same publication. An early version of

¹⁰¹ NCMM, YKSMM: 2008.1109.

¹⁰² BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(135).

¹⁰³ BL, 1865.c.4.(97).

¹⁰⁴ BL, W.P.4890.(15).

this was printed on cheap paper in 1871 after the Pentre Colliery explosion in South Wales. It combined the title and a brief description of the disaster with a three-page long poem in Welsh, with a second title, brief description, and stanza-long verse on the last page in English [See Fig. 46]. These types of bi-lingual poems were also produced after later Welsh mining disasters such as the 1913 explosion at Senghenydd.¹⁰⁵ These ballad sheets took a similar form to the others produced: some contain small factual errors and were clearly printed hastily (alignment is not always central and some small smudges can be discerned in places). What is interesting about these Welsh ballad sheets is that they are clearly appealing to a local audience. The small sections in English were for the families who had moved to the area to mine, but the majority of the text was in Welsh, for those who spoke it as their first language.

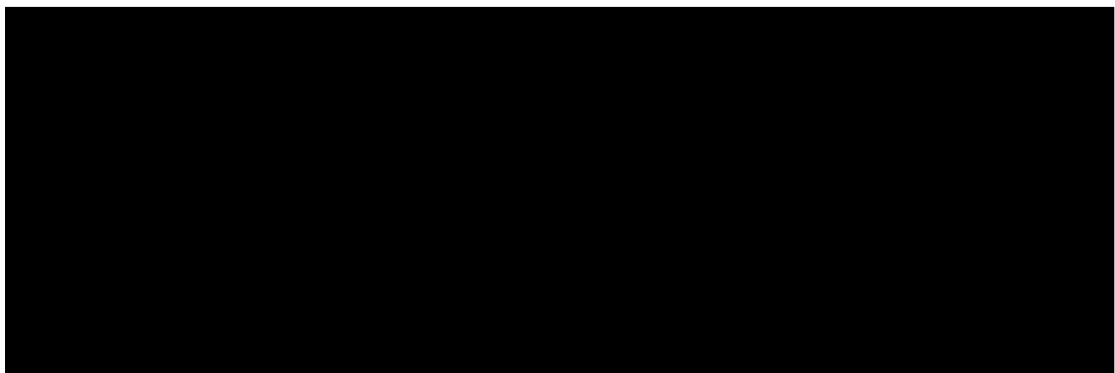


Fig. 46. Ballad sheet (Welsh and English).¹⁰⁶

As with other types of memorial ephemera, the inclusion of a list of the dead in memorial broadsides was not uncommon. An early example of this was a decorated list of the 204 men and boys who perished in the Hartley Colliery disaster in 1862.¹⁰⁷ A memorial sheet with the names of the West Stanley victims and an image of the crowd waiting at the pithead, very similar to those produced on postcards, was printed by a firm local to West Stanley.¹⁰⁸ Some lists of the dead were incorporated into the cover of ballad sheets and the sheet music to ‘Daddy, we’ll meet some day’, produced after the 1931 Bentley Colliery disaster, was fronted by a list of the dead.¹⁰⁹ In 1925, after the Scotswood Colliery disaster, a memorial broadside containing the names of the dead claimed that it was printed as ‘an Expression of Sympathy for the bereaved Families.’¹¹⁰ These lists of the dead appeared after nearly all mining disasters from the 1860s into the interwar period. They were sometimes incorporated

¹⁰⁵ RBA, SC388.

¹⁰⁶ StF, 1273.31.

¹⁰⁷ BM, 2006-58.8.

¹⁰⁸ BM, 1972-674.

¹⁰⁹ NCMM, YKSMM: 2006.372.

¹¹⁰ BM, 1985-72.2.

into other types of memorial ephemera, but the naming of the dead was seen as an important part of the memorial form.

The broadsides and the memorial poetry were popular both before, and after, the First World War. During the war, memorial poetry to figures such as Edith Cavell was published, in the same manner as the memorial cards to their memory.¹¹¹ Some of this poetry was sold and the money donated to charitable causes; however, other pieces of work on the same topic were sold for profit. During and after the war, small memorial pamphlets, such as the folio poem produced by Emmie Sillito, 'Killed in Action', were more common.¹¹² This does not diminish the importance of the names of the dead but instead suggests that there were other ways of remembering them which did not involve mass printed ephemera. Street shrines and local rolls of honour were popular following the war and, to a large extent, negated the need for mass produced ephemeral items for people to use as a remembrance tool, other than in specific, localised events such as the Silvertown explosion. Because of the length of the war, and the different impact it had on different localities, different forms of memorial ephemera were developed to cope with wartime loss.

These popular responses were also common after disasters elsewhere in Western Europe. After an earthquake in Ischia, in the gulf of Naples, in 1883 there was a ballad sheet produced in Britain to commemorate it.¹¹³ Ballads after mining disasters were also common; the Courrières disaster in 1906 remains the worst mining disaster that Europe has ever seen, with 1,099 men and boys losing their lives in the explosion. The damage was so great that W. N. Atkinson, a member of the H. M. Miners Inspectorate, was sent to write an accident report so the steps which led to the Courrières disaster would not be repeated in Britain.¹¹⁴ In France, after the Courrières disaster in 1906 both memorial ballads and commemorative broadsides were produced. One such memorial ballad, 'Terrible Catastrophe aux Mines de Courrières', was penned by the poet Henri Coudonnier in Berlin, and printed in the Bruay commune.¹¹⁵ Coudonnier set the new words to the popular tune of *Bérager à l'Académie* and the ballad sheet was printed with a traditional black mourning border. Philippe Marchand estimates that in the three weeks following the disaster, six songs and one poem were rapidly created, although this seems like a low estimate for such a dramatic event which was so well reported

¹¹¹ See BL, Tab.11748.aa.2 for memorial material relating to Edith Cavell and Earl Kitchener.

¹¹² BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(109).

¹¹³ JJC, Catastrophes and Phenomena Box. Ballad for earthquake in Ischia.

¹¹⁴ H. Cunningham and W. N. Atkinson, 'Report to His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department on The Disaster which Occurred at Courrières Mine, Pas de Calais, France, On March 10th, 1906' (London, 1906).

¹¹⁵ Philippe Marchand, 'La mine et les mineurs du Nord-Pas-de-Calais dans la chanson populaire 1880–1914', in Centre Historique Minier, *10 mars 1906: La catastrophe des mines de Courrières... et après?* (Lewarde, 2007), p. 219.

on.¹¹⁶ As with the British examples, the poetry included in the ballad sheets was overtly sentimental: a quarter of the poem by Coudonnier consists of a discussion between a mother and her small daughter who is questioning her mother about when her papa is returning home to which her mother responds that alas he is in the cemetery, killed by the firedamp ('grisou').¹¹⁷ More work needs to be done in this area, but the ubiquity of the ballad form across Europe and in the wake of mining disasters suggests that, much like postcards being consumed and traded between people living in different European countries, so, too, there may be hints at a European culture of producing disaster ballads.

Ballads and broadsides decreased in popularity throughout the interwar years. However, some of these kinds of printed poem were still in existence after the Second World War. After the Thornhill Colliery disaster in 1947, J. Rusby wrote a memorial poem whose profits went to the Mayor's Disaster Fund.¹¹⁸ However, as printing techniques became more sophisticated the inclusion of images of the dead or of the colliery where the accident happened, taken from photographs, was possible and generic images of the pit head began to be included in many memorial broadsides.

A form of memorial ephemera almost exclusively used for mining disasters and large public events, never for documenting wartime loss, was the memorial napkin. The first printed souvenir napkin in Britain was created in July 1887 when a quantity of decorated blank paper napkins, with printed decorative borders, were overprinted by John Dickinson Ltd. for their annual dinner.¹¹⁹ These quickly became popular and blank napkins were quickly imported in bulk. They were printed with a variety of decorative borders printed in up to five colours. The border designs were reasonably intricate but, as has been noted by Rickards, this was juxtaposed with the locally printed commemorative message, which tended to be printed in a rather crude manner.¹²⁰ As with the other types of street literature, such as broadsides and ballad sheets, they were commonly sold on the street on ceremonial occasions. These items were particularly popular between the early 1900s until just after the First World War ended; however, there are examples of memorial napkins being produced after mining disasters until 1925.¹²¹ Several different types of memorial napkin could be produced by different printing companies to be sold at the same event. This was true for general public occasions, such as a demonstration in Hyde Park in support of votes for women, and for memorial napkins after

¹¹⁶ Marchand, 'La mine et les mineurs', p. 210.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 219.

¹¹⁸ NCMM, YKSMM: 1992.1403.

¹¹⁹ Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera*, p. 221.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ BM, 1985.338.1.

disaster.¹²² After the West Stanley disaster in 1909, Burgess, the Palatine Printing Company in Wigan, and some unknown printers who died not stamp their credentials onto the napkin all created memorial napkins, presumably to sell at the funerals of the victims.¹²³

The Burgess family were a particularly prolific printer of memorial napkins, and operated out of various locations in London throughout the early twentieth century. When the business was under the control of William Burgess, at the turn of the century, the company described themselves as ‘Wholesale and Export Souvenir Handkerchief Printers’.¹²⁴ By the time that Mrs Burgess had taken control of the business a few years later, they had dropped this explanation and it was seemingly under her direction that they extended their printing company to include memorial cards after disasters or the death of famous individuals. The memorial napkins produced tend to be of a rather poor quality. A memorial napkin to commemorate the marriage between Capt H. G. Moore-Gwyn and Winifred Gilberton was printed particularly poorly: the ink has smudged and the setting is crooked [See Fig. 47]. The fine paper was difficult to print on to, but the positioning of the centrepieces varies wildly, and some are very poorly aligned.

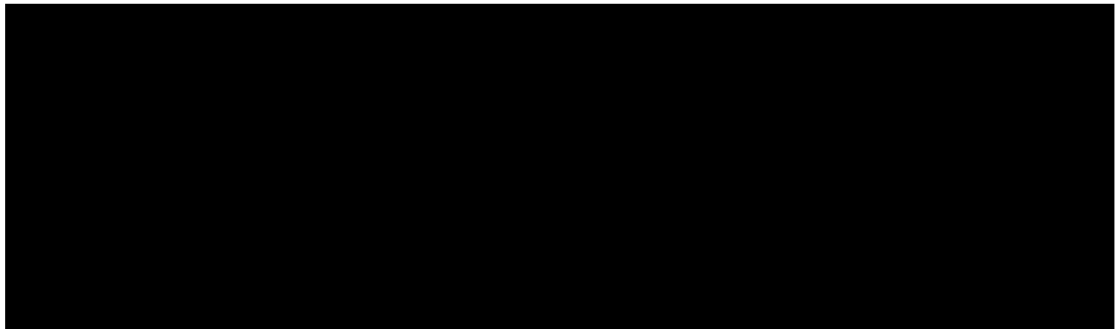


Fig. 47. Poorly printed Burgess napkin.¹²⁵

The Burgess family did not corner the market completely, and other printers also took advantage of the cheaply imported thin paper napkins to create revenue after significant events. Indeed, the napkins produced were not always printed onto thin paper and, after a char-a-banc crash in County Durham, one printer used paper doilies to produce a commemorative napkin [See Fig. 48]. Generally, the memorial napkins produced were square but some companies which had imported other thin Japanese borders printed them onto a rectangular background [See Fig. 49].

¹²² BL, 74-1899.b.10.(31–32).

¹²³ BM, 1984-173.5; 1980-345; 1982-134.1.

¹²⁴ BL, 74-1899.b.10.(8).

¹²⁵ StF, 65.184-581.



Fig. 48. Memorial printed onto paper doily.¹²⁶

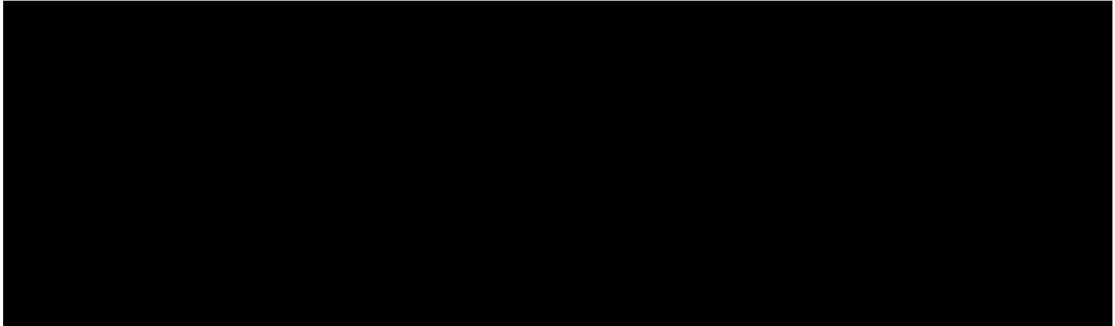


Fig. 49. Alternative Japanese printed napkin.¹²⁷

Some printers produced memorial napkins which used print forms created for a different type of ephemera, which were included in the napkin design. For example, in a memorial napkin to commemorate the 344 men and boys who died in the Pretoria Pit explosion in 1910, the list of names of the dead has clearly been used both on the napkin and on another type of memorial ephemera [See Fig. 50]. The small note of the printers underneath the list of names is repeated on the napkin in a way that it would not, had the list of names had appeared alone.

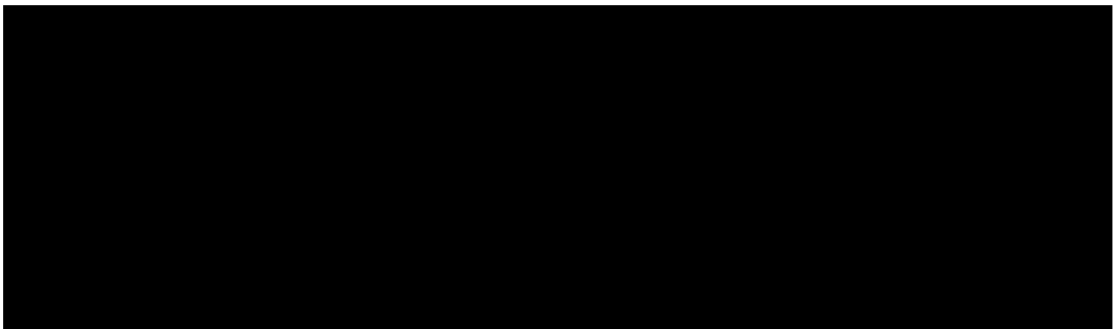


Fig. 50. Memorial napkin overprinted with second memorial form.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ BM, 1927-553.3.

¹²⁷ BM, 1995-100.

¹²⁸ NCMM, YKSMM: 1995.476.

The afterlife of the napkin is largely unknown. There some examples of napkins that, judging by the fading surrounding their decorative border, were framed and displayed somewhere for long enough that the light produced a colour variation in the napkins.¹²⁹ Who this framing was by, and whether it was done by one of the family members of the victims, is unclear. Memorial napkins constitute some of the most ephemeral items in this chapter. They were incredibly fragile, and their purpose seems to have been that they were an aesthetically pleasing alternative to the traditional memorial card. They were in vogue only for a short period of time, but some printers capitalised on their success into the interwar years suggesting that consumers saw these items as desirable for some time after their initial glamour had worn off.

These ephemeral items - memorial napkins, postcards, broadsides, and ballad sheets - were, in their traditional forms, all meant to be temporary items. By combining these pieces of ephemera with a memorial message their longevity extended and their meanings became complex. To some they were partially an augmentation to a news story, part mass memorial, and had the potential to be a carrier of personal remembrances and memory triggers. Slightly different to these forms of ambiguous ephemera were those which elicited more than an empathetic response in the viewer. A third category of ephemera, which demanded a physical response from the owner, was also in circulation during the period.

Family rolls of honour were produced in and after the First World War, and forced families to personalise the roll by writing their details into blank boxes which detailed their wartime service. The Disabled Soldiers & Sailors Handicrafts Association produced a 'Family Roll of Service and Sacrifice in the Great War': a single sheet, illustrated paper document in which one could record the rank, name, 'sphere of action', 'theatre of war service', relation, and related information about family members and of the war [See Fig. 51]. The roll is illustrated and contains small spaces around the outside for images of family members to be pasted. The Brown family filled out one such family roll of honour; one son was killed, another was wounded in France, and the rest of the family had been involved in various war work throughout the four years. The Brown family presumably wanted their wartime service noted as their family roll was donated to the British Museum in 1919.¹³⁰ It is unclear how popular these items were, and whether they were displayed in the home. It seems that they were intended to be framed: the decorative tone of the Disabled Soldiers & Sailors Handicrafts

¹²⁹ BM, K245; Unknown Accession Number.

¹³⁰ The British Museum made a concerted effort to collect ephemera after the First World War; Tab.11748.aa.2., the collection in which the family roll of service is found, seems to be a collection of personal ephemera sent by the public as opposed to Tab.11748.aa.4., a collection of ephemera donated by the troops in response to a call for paper items to be submitted to the Museum in the Army Regulations 1914.

Association's Family Roll of Honour lends itself to other decorative mementos designed to be displayed within the home during the interwar period.

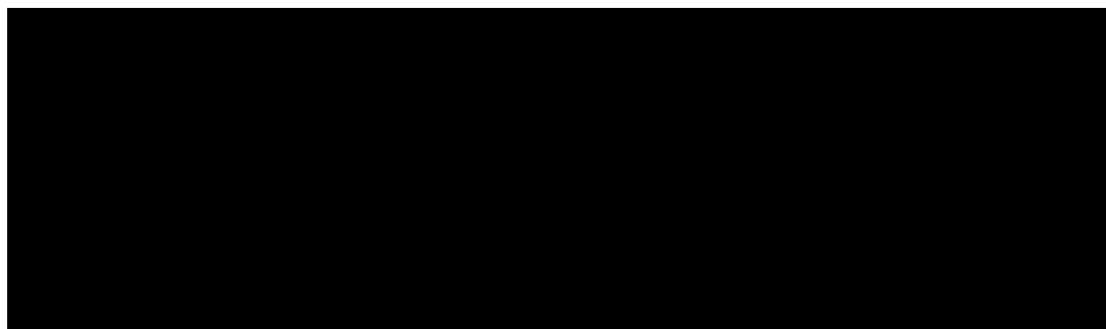


Fig. 51. The Brown Family Roll of Honour.¹³¹

Wealthy families sometimes commissioned a roll of honour specific to their family. The descendants of the peer and MP John Frederick Campbell, First Earl Cawdor, printed a roll of honour highlighting their services in the First World War between 1914 and 1915.¹³² It was printed on thick card with a small decorative border but, unlike the Disabled Soldiers & Sailors Handicrafts Association family roll of honour, had very little decoration. Even though the roll was printed it did not stop the family from making slight changes to the document where they deemed it appropriate. The entry relating to Lt Wilfred Charles William was altered by a small press cutting, presumably from his obituary, pasted over the original entry [See Fig. 52]. Thus, an already personal piece of ephemera was available to customise even further as those in charge of the document felt was necessary.

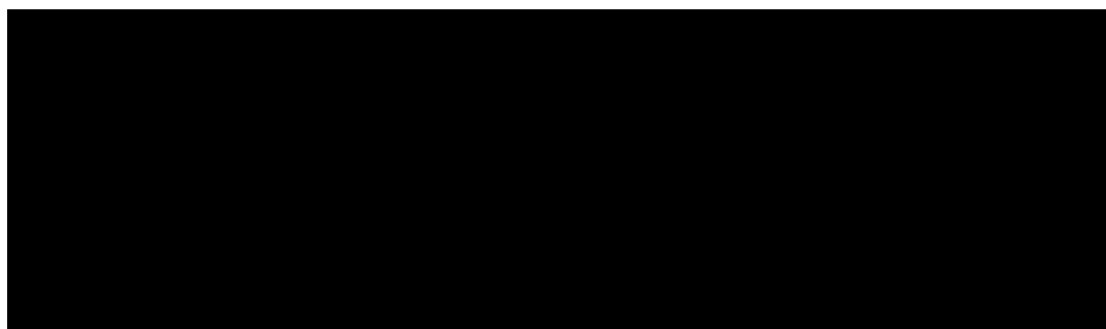


Fig. 52. Commissioned family Roll of Honour.¹³³

It is unclear whether these pieces of ephemera were framed and displayed in the home. It seems likely that in the case of the first family roll of honour discussed it was designed to be displayed: the item's size, decorative nature, and space for family photographs to be added indicate that this item was meant to be displayed in the home. The affordability of these mass

¹³¹ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(165).

¹³² BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(179).

¹³³ BL, Tab.11748.aa.2.(179).

printed family rolls of honour indicate the popularity of the items; they were yet another way of recording family service and loss in an easily customisable way but which still maintained the rhetoric of service and duty in wartime. The items demanded interaction with them to become fully functional, which may have deterred some, but others seem to have readily engaged with the production of a family roll of honour. Some families may have felt that, with the government sanctioned Next of Kin Memorial Plaques and scrolls, a 'roll of honour' was unnecessary to display in the home.

Even without this prompting, some people decided to customise their ephemeral memorial items, adding names, other significant dates, or even correcting factual errors. A memorial napkin produced to commemorate the explosion at West Stanley in 1909 was added to by someone who noted that '163 [died] at Seaham on Sept 8th 1880' and 'Also 83 [died] at Easington May 29th 1951'.¹³⁴ On the back of one memorial card for those who died in the Wingate Colliery Disaster (1906) someone has recorded the death of a single man, Arkless Joice, who 'tossed himself down the shaft on the 14th of October 1906 at Sherburn Hill Pit' on the same day that the Wingate explosion occurred.¹³⁵ Someone clearly felt the need to augment the memorial card to commemorate another miner who died on the same day, albeit under different circumstances. Corrections to the number of dead could also be made. After a pit explosion, memorial cards were rapidly produced and could contain inaccurate information. On a memorial card to the West Stanley explosion someone has struck through the printed number '151' and corrected it to read: 'The 168 miners who lost their lives'.¹³⁶ These items were seen as types of ephemera which could be altered and given extra resonance through the inclusion of other significant disasters, or deaths, at the will of the owner: these were adaptable mass memorial items for those who wanted to remember multiple disasters at the same time. These popular pieces of ephemera had the ability to hold several personal meanings at once, and these ambiguous meanings demand individual responses.

These mass ephemera items were produced alongside a rich variety of alternative memorial forms. Memorial plates, replica cenotaphs, and crested china all featured in the aftermath of war, and to a lesser extent disaster. After the Senghenydd disaster (1913), plates were painted to commemorate the dead and in the wake of the First World War china manufacturers produced a large number of models which had their origins in militaria.¹³⁷ A

¹³⁴ BM, 1976-815.

¹³⁵ BM, L.141.

¹³⁶ BM, 1988.203.2.

¹³⁷ Aber Valley Heritage Centre; Robert Southall, *Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty: The First World War through the eyes of the Heraldic China Manufacturers* (Horndean, 1982), p. 8; also see Michael Reeve, 'Securing Public Safety in the 'Danger Zone': Naval and Aerial Bombardment on the North-East Coast of England during the First World War', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hull, (2019).

mass produced variation of the types of memorial objects, such as memorial glasses, these china figures were produced to memorialise larger events, such as the Armistice, reproductions of local war memorials, or notable figures such as Edith Cavell and Charles Fryatt.¹³⁸ In this way these items were very similar to the small memorial ephemera discussed here: they provided a focal point for mass remembrance within the home and elsewhere.

This rich public culture of remembrance, exhibited through the mass production of memorial items produced after both war and disaster, and communicated through ephemera and objects, were presented in similar ways. After mining disasters, the number of the dead and their names were heavily focused on in memorial material. In the aftermath of the First World War, replicas of local memorials, easy to produce and marketable to a large local audience, were turned to. The construction of the popular memory of war and disaster, built by the construction of war memorials and national remembrance days, can be seen reflected in these popular memorial items. These items were taken into the home and used as decorative objects, were sent to family and friends, or could be used in tandem with other memorial items produced. If bought by one of the bereaved, they could be fused with personal memorial material, as in the case of the Next of Kin Plaques being subsumed into family mourning rituals.

It is in these ephemeral items that a facet of the intersection between public and private mourning exists. For those who lost a loved one in the First World War, postcard reproductions of the IWGC graveyards provided a point of contact with an imagined grave which many would not have the chance to visit. For the families of mining disaster victims, these mass memorial cards often provided a collective place of remembrance in a way that a local roll of honour filled in wartime; the names of the dead were publicly listed in a memorial card form and could be viewed as a mass memorial. London based printers used personal memorial cards stock to print mass memorials to those who died in civilian bombardments. These polysemous memory items were, much as the memorial objects examined, separate to large days of remembrance. Items may have been purchased on significant days, such as a funeral, or the day peace was declared, but they were not necessarily beholden to wider remembrance initiatives: once purchased they could be used by the buyer as they wanted. Memorial ephemera was commonplace throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century: there was a strong demand and consumers utilised this material as they saw fit. As a result, ephemeral items, although linked to war and disaster, could be kept separate from the national modes of remembering which took place at local war memorials. The memory practices families and individuals chose to enact upon this ephemeral material, which could be easily

¹³⁸ Southall, *Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty*, pp. 95–103.

circulated and occupy marginal, personal, and, domestic spaces, entered into liminal spaces that national remembrance practices could not penetrate.

Conclusion

For families who lost a loved one through war or disaster, mourning began immediately. Family mourning took many forms when starting the grieving process and, as this doctoral thesis has sought to demonstrate, small memorial objects and ephemera were often involved in the construction of intimate memorial practices. The experiences of the family of James Wake are typical of those considered in this thesis. Shortly after the Washington Glebe colliery disaster in 1908, his family waited with his body, in their home, for the funeral procession to come and collect it for burial. Wake was buried alongside three other men whose bodies had been recovered from the accident. The procession, accompanied by the banner of the Glebe Lodge of the Durham Miners' Association, the Washington Temperance and Hebburn Salvation Army bands, and thousands of onlookers, arrived at Wake's house, having already collected the body of Robert Cowan who was also being buried in the same ceremony. The *Durham Chronicle* later reported:

The case of James Wake was particularly sad, for he left a widow and twelve children, the youngest of whom is only three weeks old. Many of the members of the local branch of the Durham Miners' Union assembled around the house of Wake, and after the coffin had been placed on chairs in front of the residence a short religious service was conducted by Rev. W. Pickering. Whilst the words of a well-known hymn 'When I survey the wondrous cross' were being impressively sung, several of the bystanders were moved to tears with sympathy for the widow and fatherless children, and the minister invoked Divine comfort and guidance for the bereaved.¹

Having left Wake's house, the procession proceeded to the church where, after hymns and a sermon, John Wilson, an agent of the Durham Miners' Association was asked to give a speech. According to the press:

He [Wilson] thought that the time had arrived when the workmen should have more assurance that they would go home hale and hearty than the results of our industrial life indicated was the case at present. He made no complaint. That was not the time. But he would say, as the mouthpiece of the mining industry, that the miner had the right to demand the highest safety that the highest science of the day could give him. They could not enter into the grief of the widow; they knew nothing of the miseries of the home which that day lacked its breadwinner. They did know, however, that owing to the Compensations Act, to the Miners' Permanent Relief Fund, and, he had no doubt, to the generosity of their colleagues, the widows would not have to face the haunting spectre of poverty.²

The family of James Wake, his wife Sarah, and their eleven children (the newspaper report was incorrect) did not actively participate in the ceremony, beyond sitting mutely. This was not the place for family mourning to be displayed, but for formal and public tributes. John Wilson explicitly stated that the onlookers could not understand the 'grief of the widow', nor did they attempt to, confining themselves to financial assistance. The funerals were large,

¹ *Durham Chronicle*, 28 February 1908, p. 5.

² *Ibid.*

public, and were not intended to offer the families involved in the disaster an intimate chance to say goodbye to their loved ones.

As this doctoral thesis has demonstrated, notwithstanding these public and, in some respects, somewhat impersonal aspects of memorialisation, the mourning process did not end with the funeral. Indeed, when the funeral had ended, the family returned home and a long, complex, process of memorialisation began, one in which the family had far more control and agency. A photograph of Wake played a central role in this process as the only image of him the family possessed. Despite a lack of a public role in commemorating her husband at his funeral, Sarah and her family expressed their personal grief through a variety of private and public means. A year after his death, an 'In Memoriam' notice, posted by his 'loving wife and family and his father, mother, brothers and sister-in-law', appeared in the *Evening Chronicle*, stating: 'His memory is as dear to-day as in the hour he passed away'.³ Wake's sister and her husband posted another notice in the same column. Yet, lines of agency were blurred when, immediately after the disaster, an image from a family photograph was copied and used in commercial postcards produced by Warner Gothard. The family were, perhaps, able to influence some of the public remembrance of him through control of the image. This photograph has remained above the fireplace of each successive family member who has had custodianship over it ever since. His son, Thomas Wake, who was very young when his father died, was told tales about him which were in turn passed down to his daughter. Despite the presence of a grave, and access to Wake's body before the funeral, the family recollections of memorialising him lie within the home, and a strong recollection of James Wake remains in the family, centred on the photograph of him displayed which has been displayed in the living room of each successive owner since his death.

The experiences of the Wake family were not uncommon in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Given the lack of autonomy over the burial of the dead, shared by those who lost someone in the First World War, and the majority of those who lost one or more family members in mining disasters, smaller, intimate memorial sites became a space for families to exercise agency over the memorialisation of their dead. These spaces largely centred around the home: it was here that families could begin to process the tragedy which had happened and construct suitable places to commemorate the dead. Within a domestic space, private family rituals of mourning, such as reading letters, preserving belongings, and discussing the dead occurred. It was also in this space where the dead began to be physically memorialised. Photographs of the dead took on a new meaning and provided a point of contact with a likeness of the deceased. In the case of the war dead, some of the longer-term memorial

³ *Evening Chronicle*, 20 February 1909, p. 2.

forms had an official military aesthetic, as government commissioned Next of Kin Memorial Plaques and medals were incorporated into home displays to the dead. Memorial cards were ubiquitous in this period and disseminated to friends and family. So, too, were letters of condolence and memorialisation, sent to and from the home, offering consolation to the family and paper-based memorial ephemera to friends. Some families chose to take this further, and engaged with mass remembrance practices, such as the donation of an image of their loved one to the IWM's 'Bond of Sacrifice', creating a link from the home to a national institution. Other public declarations of family mourning were expressed through newspapers. The 'Death' and 'In Memoriam' columns fulfilled a semi-performative role which indicated the loss of a loved one to the wider world and were accessible to a range of family members, and also sweethearts, who were able to use such columns to assert memorial power over the dead given their liminal status in the family. These intimate spaces, which the family could enact control over, were contrasted with the public facing multitude of mass ephemera produced contemporaneously to family memorialisation practices. Wilson's speech at Wake's funeral highlighted the perception that charitable giving was one of the best ways to support the widows and children of dead miners, and a plethora of charitable ephemera was produced by concerned individuals and organisations. Empathetic ephemera was also produced by the employers of the men who went to fight, and by mining associations who dealt with the aftermath of crises. So, too, was commercial ephemera turned to. Such items were peppered with images of the dead from family photographs, and these mass memorials fused with family memorial practices to propel images of the deceased men into a public arena.

This memorial material was seemingly popular throughout early twentieth century Western Europe. During the First World War many families across Europe printed memorial cards with images of their loved ones inside them.⁴ As in Britain, so, too, in France memorial ballads and broadsides were produced after mining disasters. The grief of Käthe Kollwitz and her memorial actions are now synonymous with First World War grieving among historians, yet these memorial actions, the preservation of a room, the reading of letters aloud, while limited to individual families who could afford to do this, were woven into family mourning practices throughout Europe. The connectivity of Europe and the mass popularity of printed ephemera during the period, postcards being a case in point, suggest that mass ephemeral forms of mourning may have been common across national boundaries. More research clearly has to be done in this area. However, these paper symbols of grief, some of which utilised

⁴ For a German example of this genre, see Europeana 1914–18; Memorial Card for Ludwig Weber, available at, https://www.europeana.eu/portal/it/record/2020601/contributions_111.html (accessed December 2018).

common elements, such as the inclusion of a photograph, a memorial verse, and a standard format, hints at a wider set of European memorialisation practices during the period.

Within Britain, the interwar period marked the slow transition from elaborate quasi-public rituals of mourning, such as the production of mourning cards, memoirs, and the popularity of 'In Memoriam' columns, to a quieter announcement of death. Mass ephemera surrounding victims was far less present in the Second World War than it was in the First World War. Yet, some modes of mourning, such as the importance of photographs of the deceased, their clothes, and physical mementos, were still highly significant for the individual mourner. The First World War was significant in that the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque, commissioned by the government, gave families an official mode of memorialisation which they kept in the home. That these sorts of governmental memorial items were not repeated after the Second World War reflects the different nature of the conflict, and the toll it took on civilian life. Peter Jupp and Tony Walter have argued that the Second World War lifted the deep mourning which had been cast over the nation by the First World War.⁵ The wider experience of grief, as well as the increased numbers of civilian deaths, meant that war experience and the rhetoric of 'the lost generation' did not recur after 1945.⁶ Although common graves were still used in civilian wartime funerals, which reminded people of both the mass graves of the First World War and pauper burials, a stoicism which challenged the memorial culture of the earlier conflict prevented people from mourning people in the same public way.⁷ Lucy Noakes argues for a change in attitude towards death during the Second World War: state control over the civilian corpse, which was no longer the remit of the very poor, meant that a politicised style of communal burial was brought into an urban setting.⁸ Jay Winter also suggests that the different nature of the Second World War made the memorialisation of it increasingly problematic, and the rhetoric used to comfort the bereaved in the wake of the First World War could not be repeated in 1945 in light of civilian deaths.⁹

There are some indications that family memorial practices continued to be important within families after 1939. Pat Jalland, while arguing that this later conflict dulled the

⁵ Peter C. Jupp & Tony Walter, 'The Healthy Society: 1918–98', in Peter Jupp & Clare Gittings (eds.), *Death in England* (Manchester, 1999), p. 257; Also see Pat Jalland, *Death in War and Peace* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 121–139.

⁶ Jupp and Walter, 'The Healthy Society', p. 258; also see Alan Wilkinson, 'Changing English Attitudes to Death in the Two World Wars', in Peter C. Jupp & Glennys Howarth (eds.), *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal* (Basingstoke, 1997), pp. 149–163.

⁷ Pat Jalland, *Death in War and Peace* (Oxford, 2010), p. 129; also see Mark Connelly, *The Great War Memory and Ritual: Commemoration in the City and East London 1916–1939* (London, 2002), pp. 230–233.

⁸ Lucy Noakes, 'The "worth" of grief and the "value" of bodies: Managing the civilian corpse in Second World War Britain', in Zhara Newby & Ruth Toulson (eds.), *The Materiality of Mourning* (London, 2018), p. 179.

⁹ Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 228.

emotional response to death, nonetheless offers intriguing glimpse into family memorial practices by recounting the story of a man who laid a bunch of flowers onto the street where his ancestors died on the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Blitz.¹⁰ Perhaps these family stories will be uncovered as the centenary of the Second World War approaches. However, despite the burial of the victims in a similar way and the family rituals hinted at, the mass ephemera which accompanied previous mass deaths does not seem to have been produced. As Elizabeth Roberts notes, working class attitudes to death in general, not just war related deaths, changed in the 1940s, yet why they changed is still not abundantly clear, and more research is still needed to understand this transition period.¹¹ Some families continued to turn to the 'In Memoriam' columns for succour in the face of war deaths, but these memorial postings were produced in far fewer numbers than before the Second World War, and mass memorial cards to victims were not produced in the same way as they had been after civilian deaths in the First World War. Yet, more family remembrances of the Second World War are likely to begin emerging, as veterans of the conflict are passing away in increasing numbers, which may prove the source base for a future historian of Second World War family mourning.

While this thesis has brought together, for the first time, objects and mourning practices, and theorised them in terms of family agency in smaller, home based memorialisation practices, it also demonstrates that future work has the potential to extend our knowledge and understanding of early twentieth century mourning cultures even further. The work begun in this thesis suggests that there is scope for further detailed work on the family in relation to grief and mourning. Much as there are different nuances within historical work about public memorialisation, so too is there much work to still be conducted in the realm of family memorialisation practices. The roles of different family members, siblings, and those liminal to the family, such as fiancées and sweethearts, brothers and sisters-in-law and their relation to the memorialisation of the dead, although beginning to emerge throughout this research, would benefit from further investigation. An exploration of power dynamics within the household, the arguments which undoubtedly emerged in relation to memorial practices, and a fuller exploration of the gendered nature of the custodianship of memorial items would greatly enrich future studies. So, too, could the cost of memorial items help the historian of the family: rough costs and their relation to typical wages are mentioned, but an in-depth study could reveal much about the monetary value families placed upon memorial items and the economic costs of providing a fitting memorial. The beginnings of this research undertaken in this doctoral thesis, on the practical items which families were given, chose, and displayed,

¹⁰ Jalland, *Death in War and Peace*, p. 139.

¹¹ Elizabeth Roberts, 'The Lancashire Way of Death', in Ralph Houlbrooke (ed.), *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement* (London, 1989), p. 206.

and the polysemous spaces these objects and ephemera occupied, contribute a significant development to the field of death and grief in the early twentieth century, but, this undoubtedly needs to be taken further in future.

Currently, the objects and ephemera which shaped grieving in the interwar period can be found in museums, private collections, and in family homes. The online remembrance initiatives run by Europeana 1914–1918, the IWM, and others, have highlighted the popularity and survival of these items. Next of Kin Memorial Plaques, medals, and IWGC photographs of the graves of the First World War dead, are all currently used in family remembrance practices. However, given the erosion of family memory over the last one hundred years, the extreme limit of Aleida Assmann's family memory cycle, the majority of families do not have strong memories attached to these items, when there are memories attached at all. Nonetheless, these memorial objects form a tangible link with the dead. As Annette Kuhn suggested in the introduction to *Family Secrets*: 'The past is gone forever. We cannot return to it, nor can we reclaim it now as it was. But that does not mean it is lost to us. The past is like the scene of a crime: if the deed is irrecoverable, its traces may still remain.'¹² Anecdotal memories of the soldier who died may have faded, but these objects, with stories attached or not, are increasingly becoming the focal point of family remembrance practices. Indeed, with such an emphasis on the memorial resonance of the objects, as is placed on them by these online initiatives, these items currently have an enhanced emotional resonance. These items constitute a physical link through generations and their importance within the family narrative needs to be recognised and understood. The research for this doctoral thesis indicated that there are rich family narratives still in existence. These items of remembrance, attached to family memory, form an important part of the memorial culture of memory, both in the past and now. Historians of the First World War have shied away from this intimate area of history, but, through shining light on the physical manifestations of family grief, the varied practices which emerged to help comfort the bereaved, and memorialise the dead, have begun to emerge. The families of the dead participated in wider Remembrance Day initiatives, but they also found memorial agency in the construction of memorial practices on a private and familial level. Family members attempted to mould remembrance of the dead in private, quasi-private, and public spheres, through small memorial objects and printed ephemera. This control over the memories of the deceased meant that families could actively memorialise the dead; the traces of which still echo down through family memories today.

¹² Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (London, 2002), p. 4.

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